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Stuart  
Codling  
Editor



## Max's star just keeps on rising

**Well, it looks like there's** no ver-stoppin' him. Max Verstappen's third consecutive world championship appears to be a matter of when rather than if – and even this supposed unknown has an element of certainty about it, so prodigious has Max's propensity to win become. The smart money is on him getting the title over the line in Qatar, round 17; last year he nailed it in round 18.

If this statistic seems counter-intuitive, given the widespread perception that last season was far more competitive than this one, it's just a quirk of the mathematics – the sprint races are more numerous and spread differently in 2023. Whether you like him or not (my mother doesn't, but then again he isn't from Yorkshire), Max is a veritable force of nature and this month he spoke exclusively to *GP Racing* about his inexorable rise to stardom.

We also examine the power and value of 'Brand Max'. There are those who still question whether Verstappen occupies a similar place in the commercial firmament to the likes of Lewis Hamilton, a bona-fide megastar boasting recognition (and raking in lucrative sponsorship deals) across the globe. That may be the case for now but as Mark Gallagher reveals (p42), it's the accumulation of smaller deals that mounts up. Max isn't just a merch revenue engine for the domestic market.

On top of that, we look at the unique cultural phenomenon which is Formula 1 in Holland. It's a country which has been waiting for an F1 hero

for years, but largely stood aloof from supporting potential stars until they'd already made it. When I first met John Hugenholtz – I was washing the wheels on his Chamberlain Racing Viper at Le Mans in 1998 – I had no idea of how busy he was behind the scenes of Dutch motorsport trying to rally some support for the next generation.

The struggle for career investment was real for one of our other interviewees this month. Grand Prix Drivers' Association chairman Alex Wurz is perhaps better known to younger readers as the chap responsible for making the halo happen, with all the opinion-pivoting that has entailed since 2017. Grassroots motorsport was so low-profile in his native Austria that he had to go karting in Germany and, though Helmut Marko gave him a drive in F3, this was before Red Bull money was pulsating through paddocks to the extent it has done over the past 20 years. And even that organisation is showing signs of becoming disinclined to spend...

Finally, apologies to fans of our 'Flat Chat' podcast – the most recent one was inadvertently directed down the wrong pipe and published in the feed belonging to sister title *Autosport*. But you subscribe to that too and heard it anyway, right?

**GP Racing has a podcast!**

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### Contributors



#### OLEG KARPOV

Oleg talked through Max Verstappen's stratospheric rise in F1 with the man himself, via a series of iconic pictures (p32)



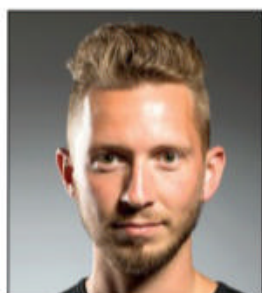
#### MARK GALLAGHER

On top of his usual excellent business column (p29) Mark has also taken a look at what exactly 'Brand Max' entails (p42)



#### MARCUS SIMMONS

*Autosport's* deputy editor investigates the long journey Holland has taken in its dogged pursuit for a bona-fide Formula 1 hero (p46)



#### ANDY HONE

Andy was on hand to capture Alex Wurz being interrogated by the editor for a fascinating and revealing Long Interview (p52)

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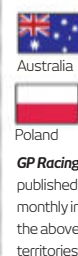
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## Open wide and say wow

La Source is such a unique place to shoot a race start and I make no apologies for coming here year after year. Although this time around I was the only photographer here...

There's a great shot my father took from the other side, in the 1950s, with another photographer standing on this spot as a Vanwall went past. Back then it was just a grassy bank. It's a lot safer now but still a heart-in-mouth moment as the cars head into the corner. You can almost touch them.

I know Carlos Sainz had an opinion about Oscar Piastri's role in this collision but, having looked through the sequence, I would say it was 50/50.



**Photographer**  
Steven Tee

**Where** Spa, Belgium  
**When** 3:03pm, Sunday  
30 July 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-R3  
8-15mm lens, 1/8000th @ F7.1















## Don't forget about the trophy...

Max Verstappen often turns away from the crowd as he's spraying the sparkling wine on the podium, the better to direct jets of fizz at the people with whom he's celebrating. Well, each to their own but it makes the conventional head-on podium image a bit tricky.

While a lot of the Hungaroring infrastructure is dated and could do with a few improvements, one thing the pit building has going for it is a roof that overlooks the podium and parc fermé. There are very few high vantage points like this anywhere else. The low late-afternoon sun works really well here as it catches that very expensive and delicate trophy, plus the spray from the bottles.



**Photographer**  
Zak Mauger

**Where** Hungaroring, Hungary

**When** 4:58pm, Sunday  
23 July 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-R3  
70-200mm lens, 1/2500th @ F2.8



## Worth the wait in the wet

By the time Q1 started in Spa I'd had enough rain to last a lifetime, soaked through to the bone every day. But a few minutes before the session started the sun actually came out. When this happens and the track is still wet you can get some really dynamic pictures so it makes all the suffering worthwhile.

This shot is from the first flying lap. F1 tyres disperse water so quickly that a dry line will appear within three or four laps of running. You need to work out the correct balance of camera settings very quickly to achieve the moody backlit look and capture the maximum amount of spray before the window closes.



### Photographer

Andy Hone

**Where** Spa, Belgium

**When** 5:11pm, Friday  
28 July 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-1DX MkIII  
70-200mm lens, 1/500 @ F16















## Time to trigger the emergency button

It's never great to see crashes unfold but if you're on hand to document them then you need to do it. I was standing high up on the natural escarpment overlooking the no-name corner, shooting through a 600mm lens with a slow shutter speed to give an impression of speed as the cars went over the kerb. It's quite a challenge because the 600mm is unwieldy.

As team photographer for Aston Martin I was naturally following Lance through the corner. He was on slicks as the track was drying in SQ2, probably a few minutes too early since he ran out of grip mid-corner. When that happened I hit my emergency button on the camera, which is programmed to change the setting to a faster shutter speed to freeze the action.



**Photographer**  
Zak Mauger

**Where** Spa, Belgium

**When** 1:03pm, Saturday  
29 July 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-R3  
600mm lens, 1/2000th @ F4









## A right result in the fickle Ardennes

This was one of the most challenging Belgian Grands Prix I've photographed. The generally miserable weather combined with the schedule-jiggling which accompanies the sprint events to make it very hard to work out when to go out onto the circuit and when to take shelter.

For the sprint shootout on Saturday I went to Les Combes but nothing was happening apart from tractors trundling around trying to clear the standing water. So I decided to walk down to Pouhon. As I passed the 'no name' corner the sun broke through. It's not normally somewhere you'd stop to take a picture so you may not have seen this angle before...



**Photographer**  
Sam Bloxham

**Where** Spa, Belgium

**When** 1:01pm, Saturday  
29 July 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-R3  
100-500mm lens, 1/1000th @ F7.1



## WHY ALPINE RESET THE VICTORY CLOCK

**01** **There was a plan put in place** for the Alpine Formula 1 team to start winning. It was said to be a 100-race project, although some uncertainty remains over when the clock started – not that this appears to matter now since neither Laurent Rossi, the man who set the target, nor Otmar Szafnauer, the man Rossi appointed to carry it out, are involved with the team anymore. Rossi was reassigned from his position as CEO of the Renault-owned Alpine brand to a nebulous role in ‘special projects’, while Szafnauer has departed to look after his garden.

“I don’t know when that 100-race [plan] started. But for me it started 30 races ago, I was told. So, to have 70 races left to do it, which is less than three years, yeah, I absolutely believe it.”

These were the words of Szafnauer guesting on the official Formula 1 podcast, released on 26 July, at the start of Belgian GP week.

### SIGNS OF INTERNAL STRESS WERE MANIFEST IN MAY WHEN ROSSI DENOUNCED THE TEAM AS “AMATEURISH”

that should help us significantly in our quest to have the best chassis. All those things are happening. They take time, and even when the individuals do come in, it takes a while for them to learn our system, our processes, and the people they’re working with. So there’s a little bit of lag as well. [But] I still believe in a 100-race plan.”

Two days after these words were digitally promulgated it was announced Szafnauer would be leaving his position “by mutual agreement” after Spa. This agreement was apparently mutual only in that both parties – Szafnauer and his superiors – agreed that they disagreed on the timeline for and methods of achieving the outlined objectives.

Sporting director Alan Permane, who had been with Team Enstone for 34 years, has also departed. At the same time it was announced that Alpine’s chief technical officer Pat Fry would be leaving to take up the same position at

“We’re on our way,” Otmar said. “We’re improving the infrastructure, there is a new manufacturing facility that’s about to come online for us. We’ve also identified and agreed to hire some like-minded individuals that are coming in 2024,

Williams, although this move had been agreed back in May.

That Renault Group boss Luca de Meo should be growing impatient for results is understandable, given his ambitions for expanding the Alpine brand’s road car range and revenues (see p29). The team finished fourth last season but has made little headway in closing the gap to the leaders and is presently on course to finish sixth in the constructors’ standings, having lost ground to Aston Martin and McLaren.

Signs of internal stress were manifest in May when Rossi denounced the team as “amateurish”. It’s understood this was what tipped Fry in favour of accepting an approach from Williams, having initially declined. After a brief lull, a major shake-up followed. Rossi appointed Bruno Famin to the role of sporting projects chief but within days it became evident this wasn’t entirely his decision, since Rossi himself was consigned to polish his CV in ‘special projects’ shortly before the





Hungarian GP. Former Ferrari engineering boss Philippe Krief was installed as CEO. Famin, who had been head of Renault's Viry-Châtillon operation only a few weeks earlier, was then appointed interim team principal of the F1 outfit, replacing Szafnauer. Permane's role was taken over by Julian Rouse, previously in charge of Alpine's young driver programme.

Famin confirmed the reshuffle was "a decision of the top management" of the Renault Group. Although he admitted his first task will be to "assess with the whole team what is the real situation" and then define "what will be the plan", Famin insisted the changes won't affect Alpine's ambitions.

"It's not going backwards, it's moving forwards," he said during the course of a press conference at Spa in which he gave few clear answers to questions about the team's direction. "Of course, it's a lot of change but it's also an opportunity to consolidate the foundation to go further and faster. The key



Alonso and Piastri (above) were both allowed to slip away from Alpine last year

objective is we want to win races and championships as soon as possible. We need to improve constantly our cars, the full package, from race to race, from year to year."

Exactly how parting ways with two leaders with more than half a century of combined F1 experience – with no clear plan for appointing their successors – could help Alpine "win races and championships as soon as possible", Famin did not specify.

This is the third major shake-up at the Renault-owned team in the past four years. Cyril Abiteboul lost his position as Alpine boss to Rossi at the start of 2021, followed by Marcin Budkowski departing ahead of Szafnauer's arrival at the start of 2022. It's believed that yet another reorganisation and change of management, if not of direction, will only slow down the team's progress. As Szafnauer pointed out, recruitment is subject to inertia because of arrangements such as gardening leave for senior hires; and even then, a period of integration must follow once a new recruit is in post.

"The previous management made a point of having a complete reset after I left, which involved dismissing around 15 people," Abiteboul told *France Info*. "We underestimate this all

This restructure could be yet another puncture to Alpine's hopes of becoming a winning F1 team in 100 races



Permane (above, right, flanked by drivers Ocon and Gasly) has been released along with Szafnauer (above, with Fry). Fry had already decided to jump ship back in May



PICTURES: GLENN DUNBAR; ANDY HONE; SIMON GALLOWAY; CARL BINGHAM

the time in F1, as in other highly competitive sectors: it takes time to get someone from the competition. When you lose 15 people and you hire, it takes two or three years before it takes effect. The reshuffle that Laurent Rossi decided to make, we haven't even really seen its impact."

Rumours suggest that one of the potential candidates to take over from interim boss Famin is none other than former Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto. However, there had been no official announcement of any further appointments as this edition of *GP Racing* closed for press. ▶





## FRONTRUNNERS PUT BRAKES ON WILLIAMS

02

**Formula 1 teams have failed** to agree on raising the cap on infrastructure spending – and this time the main opponents of increased spending are the teams traditionally considered as ‘rich’.

Current financial regulations limit not only how much F1 teams can spend each year on building cars and going racing, but also how much they can spend on their own infrastructure. So-called capital expenditure is capped at \$36 million over a four-year period, and some teams believe this figure is too low to allow F1 to achieve one of its primary goals of bringing the field together.

One of the most vocal proponents of changing the rule, Williams boss James Vowles, insists that under the current cap his team will not be able to catch up with F1’s biggest teams in terms of infrastructure for a long time to come. Appointed at the beginning of the year, Vowles has observed that some of the tools and machinery at the Williams factory are “20 years out of date”. But while the team now has the finances to invest in new infrastructure, it is constrained by the rules.

“If I wind back, 20 February, which is a few days after I started here, was the first day I put on the table that we as Williams need help,” said Vowles. “We cannot compete at the front with the facilities we have at the factory. That remains the case today.”

The comments came during a chat with the media a day after teams failed to reach a consensus on the issue at a meeting of the F1 Commission. Two options were discussed: one was to allow all teams to have an extra

**Vowles has been pushing for an increase in the infrastructure spending cap to allow Williams, which has some very out of date machinery, to upgrade its facilities**

expense allowance, and the other was to deal with specific teams on a case-by-case basis – in other words, to allow exceptions. Williams could have been one of those.

Predictably, the main opponents were those teams who do not have a pressing need to improve their infrastructure. For them, an increase in the spending cap would threaten to bring their rivals closer to them.

“The back of the grid [teams] near enough all unanimously had the hands up for most of these votes,” said Vowles. “The ones at the front end of the grid did not. There were some exceptions to that.”

The position of the frontrunners was summarised by Ferrari boss Frédéric Vasseur.

“For me, the good shape of F1 today is due to stability,” he said. “If you start to change the regulation each week because someone has an issue, or wants to invest somewhere, it’s the end of the stability.”

“Because today it’s Williams, tomorrow it will be another one who wants to buy new trucks, or someone would like to have the latest version of the simulator. We have to remember that the cost cap was the biggest step forward for F1 in terms of stability, convergence of performance, profitability of the teams and so on.”

The teams are expected to revisit the issue in October.

“Everyone’s fears of where they lie in the championship and how it affects them short-term and how powerful Williams could become will still be there,” Vowles added. “What I’m hoping out of all of it is, it’s undoubtedly agreed in that room that Williams, among all the peers, is the one with the least amount of facilities, and that needs rectifying. And we’ll have another go at fixing that and seeing if we get other people’s mindsets to modify.” ▶

## NEWS IN BRIEF... NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...

### TEAMS



IN BELGIUM, a year on from the announcement of Audi’s entry into F1 in 2026 via Sauber, both parties dismissed rumours that Audi’s engine programme is running behind schedule. A full spec engine is due on the dyno at the start of 2024.

### FINANCES

F1’s revenue for the second quarter of 2023 dropped from £744m in 2022 to £724m, mainly due to the cancellation of the Emilia-Romagna GP in May.

### TEAMS

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem would like

to see American and Chinese works teams in F1 in the near future. saying: “Everybody is allowed to have a dream. But it is also achievable.”

### DRIVERS

Frederik Vesti will drive George Russell’s Mercedes in FP1 at the Mexican GP. Although the F2

frontrunner drove for Merc in the 2022 Abu Dhabi Young Driver test, it will be his first experience of a practice session.

### RACES

The Miami GP organisers have said that the 2024 event will have an increased capacity and more support races.

PICTURES: MARK SUTTON



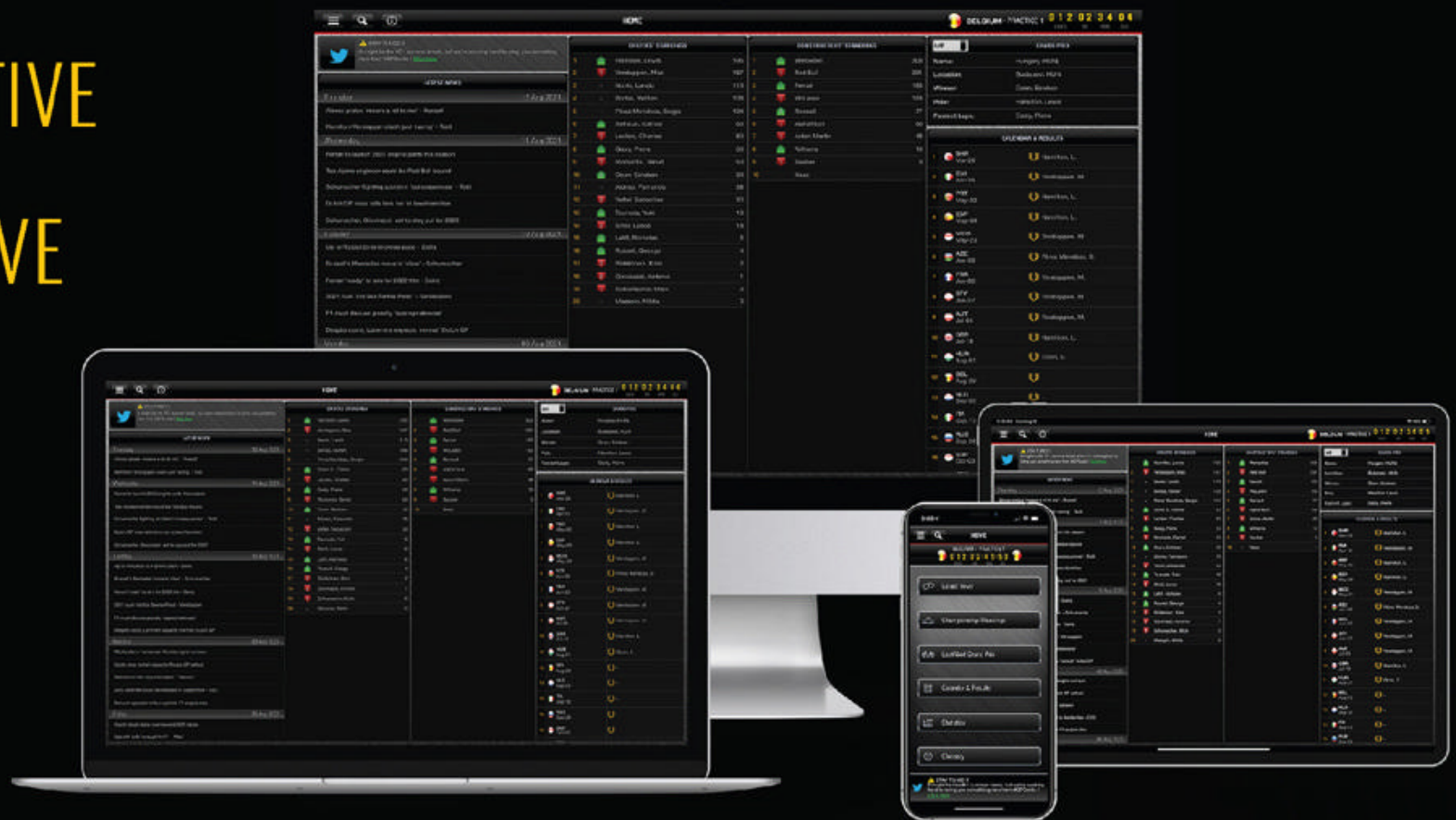


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# FERRARI AGREES MEKIES RELEASE

**03** Ferrari's racing director **Laurent Mekies** has finally left his role ahead of his move to AlphaTauri as team principal. The Frenchman will take up his position at Red Bull's second Formula 1 team on 1 January 2024.

The move was announced by AlphaTauri in April but the date of Mekies' departure from Ferrari was unclear. He had a long-term Ferrari contract and the terms of his early release were the subject of negotiations between the Scuderia and Red Bull. The announcement of the impending move was made prematurely after reports of Mekies' intentions appeared in the Italian press.

In the months that followed, Mekies continued to work for Ferrari, albeit with a reduced remit.

"His presence was limited to the pitwall during the race," his now-former boss Frédéric Vasseur told *GP Racing's* sister publication *Motorsport.com Italy*, "and there was always maximum transparency on his part. Even before we decided [on his departure date], he had already excluded himself from all technical meetings and other sensitive tasks."

Some of Mekies' responsibilities have been handed over to Diego Ioverno, a respected Ferrari veteran who has been with the Scuderia for more than two decades. He has taken on the role of sporting director.

It is understood that Mekies' early departure was made possible after Red Bull granted some of its former specialists, who had previously agreed to join Ferrari, an earlier start date in Maranello. Mekies himself will be on gardening leave for the next few months and will take up his new duties in Faenza at the start of the new year, working with new CEO Peter Bayer to restructure the team.

One of the main tasks will be to forge closer links with Red Bull Racing, which will almost certainly involve moving some resources from Faenza to the UK. Red Bull's top management decided changes were required after the team finished ninth in 2022 and made a poor start to 2023. After the first half of the season, AlphaTauri is bottom of the standings.

The team itself will almost certainly change name. It is understood to be close to agreeing a naming deal with fashion brand Hugo Boss and it is likely Red Bull will retire the AlphaTauri brand in the coming years.



**Mekies has been formally released from Ferrari and can tend to his garden for the next four months before starting his role at AlphaTauri**

**THE MOVE WAS ANNOUNCED BY ALPHATAURI IN APRIL BUT THE DATE OF MEKIES' DEPARTURE FROM FERRARI WAS UNCLEAR**

# F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest motorsport

- Q1** Which three drivers have scored points in every GP so far this season?
- Q2** Who has more podiums (excluding wins) for Red Bull: Sergio Pérez or Daniel Ricciardo?
- Q3** Zhou Guanyu started fifth in Hungary but where did he achieve his best finish of eighth?
- Q4** There is one position on a 20-car F1 grid that Max Verstappen has never started a race from. Is it 10th, 12th or 13th?
- Q5** The last German GP was in 2019. Who claimed his third and final F1 podium in that race?
- Q6** Who am I? I started 41 GPs from 1987 to 1995 for AGS, Coloni, EuroBrun, Benetton, Jordan, Minardi, Andrea Moda and Forti, claiming one podium.
- Q7** Jackie Stewart took two of Matra's four poles in F1, but who managed to claim the other two?
- Q8** Oscar Piastri and Pierre Gasly both finished on the podium of the Belgian GP sprint race. How many other drivers have been on a sprint race podium?
- Q9** At which race did Charles Leclerc last convert a pole position into a win?
- Q10** True or false: In 1957 the last two races of the championship were both held in Italy?



1 Verstappen, Alonso, Hamilton 2 Ricciardo (22 to 19) 3 Canada 2022 4 12th 5 Daniel Kyat 6 Roberto Moreno 7 Chris Amon 8 (Verstappen, Pérez, Bottas, Ricciardo, Sainz, Leclerc, Hamilton, Russell) 9 Australia 2022 10 True: Pescara and Monza



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# THE F1 ANALYST

BEN EDWARDS

@benedwardstv

PICTURES motorsport IMAGES

## MAX'S ON-TRACK STYLE SECRETS

**Understanding the specific** abilities of F1 superstars is never easy. Max Verstappen is a key example and people fascinated by motorsport are always trying to work out how he performs at such an extreme level. Karun Chandhok often analyses those abilities for Sky F1, but he also remembers a day from our joint Channel 4 era when he first witnessed Max in an F1 car while we were standing trackside at the Barcelona pre-season test.

"There was a point where we watched them coming into Turn 4," Karun recalls. "As Max was braking and turning into the corner, the rear would start to slide and I thought, 'He's going to overheat the tyres, he's lost it.' But then I realised he did that every lap and he's got this incredible ability to control the rear of the car on the brakes. It was much like they were doing in karting and I think it's because he had such a strong karting pedigree."

That's an opinion confirmed by Alan Dove, co-author of *The Science of the Racer's Brain*. Alan was testing a kart at PF International circuit when a 13-year-old Verstappen was on track in 2011 and was impressed. In 2013 he saw Max in the opening round of the FIA Karting World Championship through the final section of the same circuit.



**Verstappen's ability was obvious in karting where his control of his machine was outstanding**

"The one thing that got me was the accuracy. The kart would pitch into the final corner, the inside rear wheel would just lift up a tiny bit, but it would be the same every lap. The kart would never step out, it would be perfect with absolute control at all points. I always think maybe it's that ability that builds the foundation to such great success."

Jolyon Palmer, another ex-F1 driver who spends time studying data and watching intensely for F1 TV, also identifies Max's corner-entry technique in the current era as particularly outstanding.

"He's got smooth inputs but has the car aggressive on the nose on the edge of oversteer. Most drivers are more conventionally balanced and looking after the rear with more stability. But Max can live with it with subtle steering inputs and an aggressive front end, which is technically probably the quickest way to have a racing car."

Max also has fantastic throttle control, something that Terence Dove, Alan's brother and a longtime karting coach, showed me via video from Max competing at Castelletto in Italy in 2013. "The onboard camera doesn't show his hands but his feet," Terence says. "You see his foot off the throttle at times when you would expect it to be on the throttle. There's a sensitivity where he's understanding speed, grip and where the kart is and knowing when not to go. Most drivers just have a switch that says 'If I can put my foot down I will' while he's operating on a different level of sensitivity."

Natural ability and style add to Max's equation, but Terence has another appreciation of how he makes it all work. In a book he wrote a few years ago, *Learn How to Master the Art of Kart Driving*, Terence opened the first chapter with a simple statement: 'To become a great driver you need exceptional levels of self-esteem' and he used an element of Max's first season in F1 to demonstrate that.

In Singapore in 2015, Verstappen was ahead of Toro Rosso teammate Carlos Sainz and was asked to let him pass. Thoughts and strategy were in play, but Terence feels that as a young driver who then had the ability to shout 'No' on the radio yet wasn't overcome

with doubts and fears for going up against his team meant he had that courage to stand alone. Max continued driving his car on the limit with a clear mind which allowed him to keep his own integrity intact.

That ability to depend on his self-confidence has led to two world titles while a third is in the offing. His self-esteem still drives him but experience is playing a part.

"He's matured over time," Karun confirms, "and he's understood there's a degree of controlled aggression required to achieve the ultimate result."

Another former F1 driver, and multiple Le Mans winner, Allan McNish agrees: "Max has developed the capability to run at a speed level while keeping the tyre in position, something that normally if you're aggressive you can't do. He's got that adaptability to be able to control how much energy and how much effort he's putting in; he is so into his comfort zone now."

Allan also grew up through karting and raced single-seaters under the watchful eye of a multiple world champion who would pass on information that wasn't always easy to absorb when McNish was young and ambitious. But he can see it being taken on board by Max.

"I remember Jackie Stewart saying to us 'you win at the slowest possible pace' but we didn't do that. We didn't know anything other than maximum attack. Verstappen still has his Max attack but he also has his min attack..."

And with his 26th birthday still just ahead of him, Max has the capacity to learn even more.





Max continues to win with ease at the moment, with a third consecutive world championship just a few races away

Verstappen loves to attack, as the move on future Red Bull team-mate Sergio Pérez at Monza in 2020 showed



In an early F1 test at Barcelona Max impressed a watching Edwards and Karun Chandhok



A fresh-faced Verstappen in his first season in F1 in 2015. His 26th birthday now beckons...



In the 2015 Singapore GP Max was confident enough to refuse to let team-mate Carlos Sainz through





# UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

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## PUTTING A NUMBER ON HISTORIC AERO FIGURES

**Feedback is always welcome** but when one of our loyal readers, Ben Halford, asked me to write about the historical development of aerodynamic efficiency, I hadn't appreciated what a rabbit hole I was about to disappear into.

Firstly we need to establish what we mean by aerodynamic efficiency and how we express it. In this context efficiency would be expressed as the total downforce divided by the total drag. Here comes the first problem. While it's been possible (albeit difficult) to pull together some numbers for downforce, it's been much harder to get drag figures – so for the most part we'll focus on downforce here.

Again we need to define how we will express downforce. It could be expressed as a force but this would then depend on speed. To get round this engineers use a 'non-dimensional' number which is generally known as the lift coefficient,

coefficient as, say, 4.5 based on 1.5 square metres it would be 6.75 if based on one square metre.

It gets even worse, though. We like to express the lift coefficient as a single number but of course that number changes depending on the ride height of the car, the steering angle, and the angle of the wind amongst other things. Aerodynamicists get around this by quoting a weighted number with the weighting they apply to each individual condition based on its effect on lap time. So, for example, the drag is much more important when the steering is straight and the ride heights are low – in other words at the end of a straight – than it is when the steering is turned and the ride heights are high, the

conditions you would find in a slow corner and where the downforce is more important.

It's also true that windtunnel testing, which is where these numbers come from, has got significantly more precise since some of the earlier numbers were determined. So too have the methodologies for giving useful weighted values.

So, with these caveats, what does history tell us? Many people think the skirted ground-effect cars of the 1970s had enormous downforce. I'm sorry to disappoint you but they didn't by modern standards.

The earliest numbers I can find are for a Lotus 72 which was scanned and analysed in CFD. This, as a non-ground effect car with a very high aspect ratio wing, was dreadfully inefficient with a  $C_l$  of 0.38 and a  $C_d$  (drag) of 0.74. The efficiency was therefore only around 0.5. The earliest numbers I can find for a skirted car are for the 1981 Ensign which has been analysed in CFD by Bolton University under Professor Willem Toet, a very experienced aerodynamicist who spent many years in Formula 1. This shows a downforce coefficient of 2.76 with drag at 1.13, so efficiency has jumped to 2.44. Of course this wasn't a particularly successful car and the dominant Williams FW07 was undoubtedly significantly better than this.

In 1983 ground effect was outlawed and numbers dropped significantly. In fact it took until 1987 before  $C_l$  exceeded 2.0 again. However this was also the time that aerodynamic research began to become more scientific and progress was rapid:  $C_l$  peaked in 1994 at over 3.5. The regulation changes ►



**The non ground-effect Lotus 72, one of the earliest F1 machines for which downforce numbers are available, was aerodynamically inefficient**

or  $C_l$ , downforce just being negative lift. This should mean one car could be directly compared with another. Unfortunately this isn't that easy for two reasons.

Firstly, to arrive at a lift coefficient one needs to equate it to a reference area which, in vehicles, is normally the frontal area. Now the frontal area of a Formula 1 car is just under 1.5 square metres so many teams will use 1.5 as the reference area. Others are more pedantic and will use a more accurate number – say 1.47 – while others still will say it's only a notional thing, so let's use one square metre. This means that if we quoted our lift



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Lift coefficient (Cl) figures reached an early peak in 1994 before the tragedies at Imola resulted in regulation changes which lowered them



High lift coefficient numbers aren't everything. The 2014 Williams beat a car with much higher numbers easily in the constructors' championship



The new generation of ground-effect cars in 2022 did lower the Cl values initially but they are now beginning to approach the 2021 highs



2009 rules changes were supposed to bring down the Cl levels but the double diffuser, pioneered by Brawn, negated the intent of the regulations

2017

2016



The move to wider cars, with more aerodynamic freedom, for 2017 saw a huge jump in the lift coefficient figures which continued until 2021



You might think ground-effect cars such as the title-winning Williams FW07 had massive downforce – but not by modern standards

mandated after Imola '94 brought an immediate drop and at the start of 1995 Cl was back to around 2.1. Progress was rapid from this point but in 1998 the cars became narrower which, together with other restrictions, pegged them back to around 2.25.

By this time Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) was vastly improving understanding and by the end of 2004 Cl had reached 3.2. A reduction in diffuser size for 2005 lost around 20 points, bringing it back to 3.0, but then progress was steady at around 10 to 15 points a year until the extreme regulations for 2009 were introduced which should have dropped

downforce significantly. The infamous 'double diffuser' negated this and actually, by the end of 2009, Cl remained above 3.0.

Continuing improvements in windtunnel test techniques and further gains in CFD together with the exploitation of blown diffusers yielded a steady 15-point yearly improvement. By 2013, Cl had reached around 4.6. However, the raft of new rules for 2014 wrought a drop back to around 3.7.

The next big change was the wider cars

for 2017. These regulations allowed for more aerodynamic development freedom, which saw extreme gains of 60 points in the first year and improvements of around 20 points a year with the 2021 cars reaching Cl values approaching 5.5.

The new generation of cars for 2022 introduced much more ground effect and, while there was a small initial drop in performance it's rapidly approaching 2021 values again.

Of course these numbers need to be weighed with caution. Techniques have changed – it wasn't

**PROGRESS WAS STEADY AT AROUND 10 TO 15 POINTS A YEAR UNTIL THE EXTREME REGULATIONS FOR 2009 WERE INTRODUCED WHICH SHOULD HAVE DROPPED DOWNFORCE SIGNIFICANTLY**

until the 1990s that wheel lift was even measured – and of course the weighting applied to the plethora of results by different teams can have a profound effect. When I was at Williams an aerodynamicist joined us from a rival team and told us some numbers his previous team were heading towards for 2014. I knew we wouldn't achieve such numbers and was very concerned.

Ultimately we beat his former team by a mile in the constructors' race so numbers are just numbers. Performance is a different subject.



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# STRAIGHT TALK

MARK GALLAGHER

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This will help the team commercially, generating the kind of publicity and implicit celebrity endorsement most brands can only dream of. Or pay a lot of money for. Ultimately a transformed profile Stateside will also be attractive to sponsors eager to rise above the clutter of the more anonymous teams and backers.

The impact Reynolds and McElhenny have had through their ownership of Wrexham football club provides a glimpse of what may lie in store for Alpine. Admittedly they own all of that team through their company RR McReynolds, not a minority stake as at Alpine, just shy of the 25% threshold of what is called 'beneficial ownership'.

At Wrexham, Reynolds and McElhenny's investment triggered a surge in the club's fortunes. This has included winning the National League, moving into EFL League Two for the 2023/24 season, a growing fan base, the *Welcome to Wrexham* documentary series on Disney+ and a fascination among US sports fans and media in Wales' oldest football club.

Moving Alpine into the winner's circle will take rather more work but, if the commercial value of having Reynolds' group involved

leads to greater revenue and profitability, Enstone will benefit in a very material sense.

Otro and Redbird, the latter managing £6.6billion in assets, will open important doors, making for a heady combination of investment expertise and celebrity profile.

The speed with which the equity deal was followed by seismic changes in the team's management structure is the clearest possible indication that de Meo wants to reset its ambitions.

Laurent Rossi, the man who described his F1 team as 'amateurish' earlier this year, is gone, replaced as CEO of the Alpine automotive business by Philippe Krief. Bruno Famin has taken up the reins on the F1 programme and, while the announcement of the departures of both team principal Otmar Szafnauer and veteran sporting director Alan Permane came as a shock to some, the reaction within Enstone has been more benign.

There is a sense that, perhaps this time, there is a very real determination to see Alpine move from participant to contender. Some of that Ryan Reynolds stardust may well come in handy.

## FIRED UP? ALPINE MOVES ARE A SIGN OF RENAULT'S INTENTIONS

If anyone thought that Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo was in any way content to see Alpine trail around in the midfield, this summer changed all of that. In the space of just five weeks he sanctioned the introduction of a new equity partner and followed up with a robust management clear-out.

Since Renault is investing billions in the Alpine brand, targeting an ambitious seven-model range and almost £7billion in revenue by 2030, it's not surprising the leadership in Paris feels underwhelmed by the lack of progress on track.

Cue the changes.

To start with we had the news that Maximum Effort Investments, led by Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds, has teamed up with Otro Capital and Redbird Capital Investments to acquire a 24% stake in Alpine F1 for slightly more than £170m.



Renault CEO de Meo (left, talking to Esteban Ocon) has wielded the axe at Alpine after a perceived lack of progress to the front of the grid

The era of the billion-dollar team is now upon us, no doubt hiking the entry fee to the Piranha Club in the process.

The deal achieves much for Alpine and de Meo's aspirations for the brand. On the eve of Alpine's launch of its new EVs, attracting a high-calibre investor into the F1 programme is a golden opportunity. The key benefit will be the team's access to Reynolds & Co's business, sports and celebrity networks in the United States, F1's high-growth market.



## THIS MONTH

### Delphine Biscaye

Competition  
Manager,  
F1 Academy

Pitched at Formula 4 level, F1 Academy launched earlier this year to offer female drivers a bridge from karting to single-seaters and inspire more young women to get involved in motorsport – on or off the track. It's a journey the series' competition manager is very familiar with...



#### 2023

Competition  
manager, F1 Academy

#### 2016-2022

Team manager, Maserati  
MSG Racing/ ROKiT  
Venturi Racing

#### 2011-2016

Design engineer/project  
manager, Venturi  
Automobiles

#### 2008-2009

R&D engineer/detail  
design engineer,  
Williams F1

#### 2005-2009

Engineering diploma,  
Institut Français de  
Mécanique Avancée

**GP Racing:** You've spoken in other interviews about how challenging it was to get into motor racing. What were the biggest obstacles?

**Delphine Biscaye:** I want to say it wasn't that difficult – but, when I think about it, it was! It took a lot of perseverance – bothering people, basically. The challenge was to not stop before getting into it. Nobody in my family had done engineering, nor were they interested in motorsports. And actually I still wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I went to the interview for engineering school – but, as I was sitting in the waiting room, motorsport was all the other students there were talking about. So when they asked me in the interview, "Why do you want to study mechanical engineering?" I said, "Because I want to work in motorsport." And that's when they said, "Well, there's very few jobs in motorsport and you're a woman, so it's not going to be easy."

For me, that was it – I'd do everything I could to prove them wrong. I applied for an internship at a few teams and didn't stop calling them. I don't know how many emails I sent. Finally Williams said, "Come for a day, if you pass a test, you can have an interview and we'll see." I passed the test and they could see how motivated I was. They gave me four months, then at the end of the study placement they invited me back for another six months and I got a short-term contract, so I was there about a year and a half. Once you're in the industry you make contacts and the jobs come from there. It's the first steps that are the most difficult.

**GPR:** As well as F1 you worked on an electric vehicles with Venturi, including a land-speed record car, then on to Formula E. What prompted you to move into a team management role?

**DB:** I'd been in the Williams design office working on the Kinetic Energy Recovery System, so that was an early start in the field of electrification. Then when I moved to Venturi

#### INTERVIEW STUART COOLING

it was initially as a design engineer but then after a year or so I went into the project management side, because at that time we were setting up a lot of projects, electrifying vehicles and doing the land-speed record car.

When Formula E started I was already managing people, budgets and suppliers, so it wasn't a big step for me when Venturi joined the championship. The first year I was mostly based at the factory, organising the logistics and so on, then the next step was to take a trackside role. But it was still very much a continuation: planning ahead, solving problems, managing priorities.

**GPR:** What does your current role at F1 Academy involve?

**DB:** It's close to what I was doing before but on a bigger scale – looking after a whole series rather than one team. So where I was managing one garage before, now it's the whole pitlane, plus the logistics for everyone – freight, transportation, deliveries, dates and deadlines, everything down to when and where the teams park.

**GPR:** Next year F1 Academy will be on the grand prix supporting bill and 10 of the cars will carry liveries linking them to the F1 teams. This year you've been racing separately. Has it been a case of taking a season to make sure you've got everything right before it gets a higher profile as part of the F1 package?

**DB:** I think it was great to start like this. When you start a new series you want to do it right. We really want this to work and it's been a busy year putting everything in place. We've got some very young girls, straight out of karting, so it was important for us to get it right. There aren't a lot of female drivers right now aged 16-25 so we need to make sure the project attracts new entrants. We've progressed a lot and the interest from fans and broadcasters has been strong so we've got a good base to move to the bigger stage.









### First points

March 2015: At 17 years and 166 days, Verstappen becomes F1's youngest points scorer, finishing seventh in Malaysia. The FIA then changes the rules to forbid drivers younger than 18 from competing in F1.

### Three awards

December 2015: Max is rewarded for a stellar first F1 season: 'Rookie of the Year' and 'Personality of the Year', plus 'Action of the Year' for his overtake on Felipe Nasr on the outside of Blanchimont at Spa.

### First victory

May 2016: Another shock move from Red Bull. Max is promoted to Red Bull Racing, replacing Daniil Kvyat – and wins the Spanish Grand Prix, his first race with the senior squad.



### Shock signing

August 2014: "No risk, no fun," says Red Bull 'driver advisor' Helmut Marko as he signs a teenager to his Formula 1 junior team. Just three days after his 17th birthday Max takes part in Friday practice of the Brazilian GP to prepare for a full-time drive in 2015.

### Moving under braking

August 2016: Max's driving tactics come under fire. "You're going to kill someone," warns Jacques Villeneuve after Spa. A few weeks later the FIA bans "moving under braking".

### World champion

December 2021: The last race. Two title contenders. Zero points between them. A last-lap overtake. Max is crowned champion amid controversy over the race director's actions.

### Five more years

March 2022: Red Bull Racing moves to keep other teams' hands off Max by signing him to another long-term deal – until the end of 2028.



# THE RISE AND FALL OF MAX VERSTAPPEN

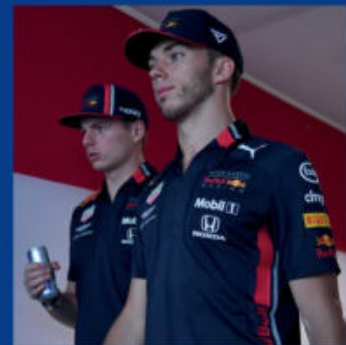


### "I'll head-butt someone"

June 2018: After incidents in the first six rounds Max lashes out in a press conference: "I get really tired of all the questions. I think if I get a few more I'll head-butt someone."

### Team-mates beware

July 2019: 12 races into the season Pierre Gasly, the replacement for Daniel Ricciardo, who left for Renault after realising Max was the team's favoured son, is broken and sent back to Toro Rosso.



### Brushing off failure

October 2017: After a season full of retirements, many caused by Renault engine failures, Max shows no signs of losing motivation, winning in Malaysia and Mexico.

### Slowing down to cash in

October 2018: Another season ends on a high, with seven podiums in nine races after the summer break, including a victory in Mexico, his fifth in F1. "I just slowed down a bit, which made me faster," he explains.

### Long-term deal

January 2020: Max's importance to Red Bull is underlined when the team announces a contract extension – all the way to the end of 2023.

### Copse crash

July 2021: Despite leading by more than 30 points, Max defends hard against Lewis Hamilton at Silverstone and the pair collide. With Verstappen out of the race, Lewis closes the gap.



### Championship leader

May 2021: Red Bull has finally made that last step to give Verstappen a car to fight for the title. He moves into the championship lead after victory in Monaco.

### Smashing the second title

October 2022: A challenging start to season is forgotten as Max wins his second title in Japan with four races to go.



### A Covid pause

December 2020: Late starting Covid-affected season gives Mercedes a chance to solve car problems and beat Red Bull, but Max wins two races – including the Abu Dhabi finale.



### Record-breaker

July 2023: With 10 wins to his name and another two for Sergio Pérez, Max and his team are on their way to an incredible achievement. Can they really win every race this year?

# VERSTAPPEN

There have been a few bumps and mis-steps along the way but the Max Verstappen story is one of a relentless upward trajectory. GP Racing takes the world champion through the story so far... and finds he wouldn't have it any other way



# THE RISE <sup>AND</sup> OF MAX VERSTAPPEN

## ▶ THE FIRST VICTORY SPAIN 2016

Winning his first race for Red Bull Racing after both Mercedes drivers crash out.

"It was crazy. The whole week leading up to it – working in the simulator, trying to get used to the car, all the procedures, getting used to the new people I had to work with – was insane. Going into the weekend I didn't have any expectations, because it was all new to me. Of course, I had a bit of luck to win the race, it all worked out pretty well. But sometimes you need that in life.

"I think it was the only time I saw Helmut [Marko] fully up close to the car. I guess he felt some pressure since he made the call to put me in the car, and a lot of people were negative about it. They didn't trust it. 'It's too fast', 'it's too soon'. And then... Well, luckily, we won that first weekend straight away. I think he was happy."



## ▶ AMAZING DRIVE IN THE WET BRAZIL 2016

Charging through the field, from 16th to third, in wet conditions for the last 15 laps.

"That was a very wet race, for sure! The conditions were super, super tough, we had red flags and all that. I started from P4 and soon got up to P3. I had Nico [Rosberg] in front of me, then passed him eventually, and after that had a huge moment out of that last kink onto the straight, but just kept it out of the wall.

"Then we pitted for inters, but it didn't work out because it started to rain even more. So we had to go back on the wets, falling down the order, and make a comeback, making it all the way back to the podium. Yeah, it was a really hectic race."

## ▶ ENGINE ISSUES BELGIUM 2017

Sixth retirement in 12 races, half of which were caused by Renault engine failures.

"Not a lot of good memories from the beginning of that year. A lot of retirements and failures, it was definitely not the most enjoyable time."



## ▶ SECOND CAREER WIN MALAYSIA 2017

A second F1 win after overtaking Lewis Hamilton early on.

"That was a very tough race. I was very ill that day, probably had a fever. I slept almost until the last moment before I had to jump in the cockpit. Of course, with the adrenaline, once you sit in the car you feel a bit better, but Malaysia in general has always been a very tough track physically. So, throughout the race I was really counting the laps, just basically wanting to have it done.

"To win that race was incredible. Especially as it was also the final race in Malaysia, at least for now. Daniel [Ricciardo] was there on the podium, too. We finished one-two the year before when he won and I was second, and now we were first and third. So I think both of us have good memories from there."



## RICCIARDO CRASH AZERBAIJAN 2018

Hard defence causes a crash with Red Bull team-mate Daniel Ricciardo.

"That day we were just racing a bit too hard between each other and, yeah... it got to this.

"Of course, that's a thing you normally never want to see. That wasn't great for the team. But we all sat down after that and cleared everything. It was very straightforward. We realised that we didn't do the right thing and should have raced a bit more carefully."



## RED BULL HOME VICTORY AUSTRIA 2018

Scoring Red Bull's first home track victory, capitalising on Mercedes retirements.

"Until that point, we never had amazing results at our own grand prix. We always want to do well there, so to get the win was a great feeling. It was a tough race as well, because of the tyres. There was a lot of blistering, so I was hanging in there and the two Ferraris were catching. But we managed to hold on."



## OCON INCIDENT BRAZIL 2018

Crashing out of the lead while trying to stop Esteban Ocon unlapping himself.

"Huh! That was looking like a great result but, we had this. These things happen. They shouldn't, but this time it did – and I finished second where we should have won."

## FIRST WIN WITH HONDA AUSTRIA 2019

Scoring a first win for Honda after a controversial battle with Leclerc.

"I stalled at the start, but we really had a great, great car that day. It was challenging towards the end. It seemed like Charles was really struggling with his tyres, and we had a good battle. And because we've known each other for such a long time, I guess that made the battle even more intense.

"It took a few hours before the final [stewards'] decision was out. But I thought that was good racing, and with Charles we didn't have any issues. If I would have been in his position, I would also have been disappointed not to win the race. But also, it was so early in our careers, so I'm sure we both knew we would get into these positions more often in the future.

"We flew back with Charles that evening. I think people always made it [the battle] a bit more of a thing. We just flew back home and it was all OK."





# THE RISE OF MAX VERSTAPPEN



## THE FIRST POLE HUNGARY 2019

Scoring a maiden pole before being overtaken by Hamilton in the race with three laps to go.

"It was a great Saturday. I think we really nailed the qualifying that day. Unfortunately, we couldn't hang on in the race, but the first pole position is a nice thing to achieve. On one hand we didn't win but, to be honest, I think we didn't have the car in the race to really challenge. When I look back at it, the qualifying was just really good – but in the race you could see they were just faster.

"We did everything we could as a team, and there was no real disappointment or anger at that time because we really felt like we optimised everything we could. But when you're just lacking pace, it's not much you can do, right?"

## PASSING LEWIS TWICE EN ROUTE TO VICTORY BRAZIL 2019

When strategy made the difference.

"Another hectic race, but a fun one! We had to work for it: we were fighting throughout the whole race and kept calm. Hannah [Schmitz, Red Bull's head of strategy] was on the podium with me that day. She made the call to switch to the soft compound and have a go at the end while Mercedes stayed out on the older tyres, and it paid off."



## FORMATION LAP SHUNT HUNGARY 2020

Finishing second after a surprise crash on the lap to the grid.

"That was not a great lap to the grid. I slipped up and hit the wall, but it was incredible what the team achieved in how quickly they could repair the car on the grid with the limited amount of tools.

"As soon as I arrived to the grid, I jumped out – we have procedures, the anthem, and all the other things, but I also wanted to give them more room to work. And they made it! The car wasn't fully straight, but it worked well enough to finish second."



## FINISHING 2020 ON A HIGH ABU DHABI 2020

Ending the Covid season superbly by beating both Mercedes drivers.

"That whole year was a bit lonely for me, because I was always finishing second or third. We didn't get to fight with anyone from behind, but were too slow compared with Mercedes that year, they were super dominant. So to get that win at the end was very satisfying.

"We had a good race, everything worked well. But it was good to leave that season behind us because that year with Covid was tough for everyone."



## FIRST MONACO WIN MONACO 2021

Moving into the championship lead after his first Monaco win.

"I had a few tough weekends in Monaco, so to get my first win there was super-nice. I think the whole weekend we had a good car, and it was just unfortunate that with the red flag in qualifying we couldn't really show the full potential. Otherwise, I think we could have started from pole. But then, Charles, he couldn't start on Sunday because of the gearbox issue after his shunt on Saturday – and we were basically P1 on the grid and controlled the race to the end."

## THAT CRASH WITH LEWIS

### BRITAIN 2021

Controversial clash which ended with 51G crash.

"Probably one of the least enjoyable races for me. Hitting the wall, that one definitely hurt."





# THE RISE OF MAX VERSTAPPEN



## FIRST HOME RACE VICTORY

### NETHERLANDS 2021

Winning on home soil on his first attempt.

"It was one of the first races [since the pandemic] where almost full capacity was allowed, so that was really great, to see all the fans there. And then to win your home race as well, at the first attempt, I think that was great.

"The atmosphere was unbelievable, but I didn't have a lot of trouble moving around. I thought it would be way worse! But they actually managed it really well, given that the track is as it is, with only one road in and one road out really.

"I wouldn't say it all created more pressure. I was in a championship battle, so the pressure was naturally on. You want to do your best and optimise everything and you always want to try to win, but you need to be realistic sometimes and just score points. But we had a great car that weekend to go for it."



## SECOND PLACE DESPITE ENGINE PENALTY

### RUSSIA 2021

Second-place finish after starting from last on the grid.

"Without that second place, it would have been very difficult in the championship. We had to start from the back because of an engine change, and for a long time in the race it looked like we couldn't really advance to where we wanted to be.

"But the rain came, and with all the chaos we made the right calls. It was super slippery, you had to be very careful with the weather, and the rain was increasing. I don't think I had any massive moments, as far as I remember, but we really had to be super careful – and ended up second. That was a very important result and I was very happy with how the race turned out."

## WORLD CHAMPION!

### ABU DHABI 2021

Clinching his first world championship title

"When you win the championship, especially your first one, it's always very emotional. Having my close friends and family there, it was something I'll never forget. And of course, with the way everything played out... It was very crazy.

"Everything came down to that last race. I think everyone was super-nervous. Then, that last lap, crossing the line I had a cramp in my right leg. It was just hard to stay full throttle because my leg was basically just passing out. As soon as I saw the light on Lewis's car blinking, meaning his battery was saving, I went for the move and it relaxed my foot, because I could go off the throttle! So in a way, it all worked out. But on the other two straights, it was painful to keep it flat out. I've had it once before, but to have it when there was so much pressure, knowing this is for the championship... You have to deal with it. I would always have been upset with myself if I'd lifted. These things people don't see from the outside, but that was what I was dealing with while battling Lewis and fighting for the championship... Crazy times!"







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# THE RISE AND RISE OF MAX VERSTAPPEN



## POOR START AUSTRALIA 2022

Second retirement in three races.

"A very painful weekend. We were lacking a lot of pace so weren't competitive and we retired. So not an ideal weekend, and painful in terms of points. The title wasn't looking great at that point. Not only was the gap to Ferrari big, but we were also slower than them. But as a team, we pulled through."

## UNEXPECTED CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD AFTER FERRARI FAILURE

SPAIN 2022

Takes full advantage of Ferrari mishaps.

"That's how the sport goes sometimes. I think that weekend we weren't the quickest, but we got lucky because of Charles' retirement. Sometimes you need to get lucky, but we were there to take advantage and were back on track!"



## WORLD TITLES: TWO AND COUNTING

JAPAN 2022

Clinching his second title in shortened Suzuka race.

"Rain, tough conditions, crazy delays, but the race itself went really well. To win the second title in Japan was amazing, and very nice for Honda. It all came together. And also with the fans you see in the background, they're still there in the dark. It's insane."

"There was confusion with the points [over how many should be awarded in a shortened race] but, for me, it didn't really matter. If we hadn't won it there, we would have won it the race after."



## SCORING WIN 12 IN A ROW FOR RED BULL RACING, BEATING McLAREN'S ALL-TIME RECORD

HUNGARY 2023

Record-breaking win on his march to a third title.

"It was a pretty perfect day. From the start we had a good launch, for once, and we then could look after our tyres quite well, and every stint just eked out a bit more of a gap, and the car was really enjoyable to drive."

"For the team, 12 wins in a row is incredible. What we've been going through the last three years is unbelievable. Hopefully we can keep this momentum going for a long time."





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Type **'Max Verstappen'** into Google and one of the first terms its autocomplete function suggests is 'net worth' – which will direct you to many websites taking a wild punt at that figure. But it's not the contract numbers which create a star driver's true value. And while Max's personal backers are largely Dutch, that is set to change as he becomes a global megastar...

# MAX

# POWER

WORDS MARK GALLAGHER PICTURES  EA SPORTS, RED BULL, HEINEKEN

**AS** Max Verstappen lines up to join Ayrton Senna, Nelson Piquet, Niki Lauda, Jackie Stewart and Jack Brabham as a triple world champion, the 25-year-old Dutchman is already one of the biggest and most marketable stars in Formula 1 history. The fact that he is joining the ranks of the sport's top 10 championship winners while only mid-career leaves plenty of room for more sporting records to be broken.

Now tied to Red Bull until the end of the 2028 season, by which time he will have turned 31,

Verstappen has a base contract and bonuses which will ensure a financially sound future for him and future family generations. Talks of driver salary caps are, for the moment, off the table.

While the usual clickbait speculation on the internet places his salary at over £40m per season, in reality the only people who know what the contract contains are the principal negotiators, Christian Horner, Verstappen himself and manager Raymond Vermeulen. Given that he came into F1 as a fresh-faced 17-year old, the cumulative gains from the nine seasons

to date and five years ahead means substantial career income for Red Bull's superstar.

Michael Schumacher was estimated to have earned in excess of £450m during 19 seasons, a career span Verstappen will reach at the still-young age of 36. If he emulates Fernando Alonso and races into his 40s, it wouldn't take much for him to become F1's first billion-dollar driver based on cumulative career income.

"Max has a very bright future whatever he chooses to do," says David Coulthard, a fellow Red Bull ambassador who knows a lot about





Verstappen penned a deal with EA Sports at the start of this year involving the new F1 23 game (above and left)

his love of music and fashion, Verstappen's interests beyond F1 lie within motorsport.

Max is a life-long computer gamer and sim racer. His Redline racing team is an important hobby-turned-business, one which creates a powerful opportunity for engagement with fans and audiences globally. It also builds further commercial opportunities for online partnerships.

His social media following is strong at around 15 million followers, around one third of that enjoyed by Lewis Hamilton. Smaller numbers but, with a high level of engagement, most particularly with his orange army of fans in the Netherlands, no less lucrative.

Aside from his salary and bonuses from Red Bull Racing, personal sponsorships, licensing agreements and brand ambassadorships represent an important source of commercial income for the driver dominating the 2023 season. He has a range of commercial partnerships, each at a different stage of maturity.

Dutch drinks giant Heineken signed a six-year deal with Verstappen at the beginning of this year, commencing a relationship which will continue until the end of his current Red Bull Racing contract. Heineken is one of F1's major partners, a relationship which includes title sponsorship of selected Grands Prix, and it also has a commercial agreement with Red Bull Racing.

However, the opportunity to extend its commitment in F1 to Verstappen was simply too good to miss. While Heineken's F1 sponsorships are part of an overall global marketing strategy, the appeal of partnering with a Dutch superstar will have been an additional factor for the Amsterdam-headquartered business. ▶



building a career inside and outside the cockpit.

“Considering that I’m still associated with Red Bull 15 years after I finished racing in F1, Max can look forward to similarly long-term relationships. It’s the model Jackie Stewart first introduced, and Max is perfectly placed to build on everything he’s achieving. He’s very dedicated to his racing, does precisely what’s required to get the job done and is authentic in what he delivers. What you see is what you get, and that’s appealing to partners.”

While Verstappen has sometimes teased that an early exit from F1 might be on the cards, the

reality is that both his Red Bull contract and burgeoning commercial opportunities confirm otherwise. Talking to some of those who know him best, racing in F1 and the purity of the driving challenge remain his primary interests.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

There is a raw simplicity about Verstappen the racing driver. Everything feeds off the passion he has for the day job so, while rival Lewis Hamilton benefits from taking his mind off racing through





## A NATIONAL ICON

Verstappen's hero status in the domestic market has always been clear and the Netherlands will continue to provide opportunities long after his racing career ends. As his country's first F1 race winner and world champion, Verstappen enjoys iconic status.

Early partners included Dutch accountancy software company Exact, a deal which only came to an end in 2019 following the company's sale to American private equity company Apax Partners.

Supermarket giant Jumbo began partnering with him in 2016 and a visit to any of its premises gives some indication of how well that relationship has been leveraged. Giant point of sale displays for Red Bull are in evidence, Verstappen's smiling face beaming across the food and beverage aisles. The Jumbo deal is set to end in December, a victim of the company's tactical withdrawal from a range of high-profile sponsorships in the wake of a scandal involving its former CEO.

A 2018 deal with Dutch pay-TV network Ziggo was followed by last year's announcement that Verstappen would become a brand ambassador for the streaming company Viaplay. This year got off to a strong start: a deal with EA Sports, the computer gaming division of Electronic Arts, promises collaboration with Verstappen on content creation across its product portfolio.

Dutch vehicle leasing giant Leaseplan is a

**Heineken was already involved with F1 and Red Bull, but opted to sign a six-year deal with Verstappen at the start of 2023**

partner through its CarNext.com business, and G-Star clothing, a Dutch brand with international markets, has been on board since 2019.


While personal appearances for a current Formula 1 World Champion can command a

fee of £500-800k depending on location and requirements, sponsorships which feature explicit endorsements and branding on helmets or clothing can command as much as £2m. It's the cumulative effect of these smaller deals which can be dramatic. In Michael Schumacher's first year of retirement, 2007, his income of non-racing activities remained over £20m. All those 'bits and pieces' really add up.

One of the great strengths of Verstappen's growing commercial record lies with his manager. A life-long family friend and associate, Vermeulen comes with a reputation for being straightforward while understanding the value his driver can bring. He's a pragmatic deal-maker, bringing with him a direct style, a common trait among the Dutch.

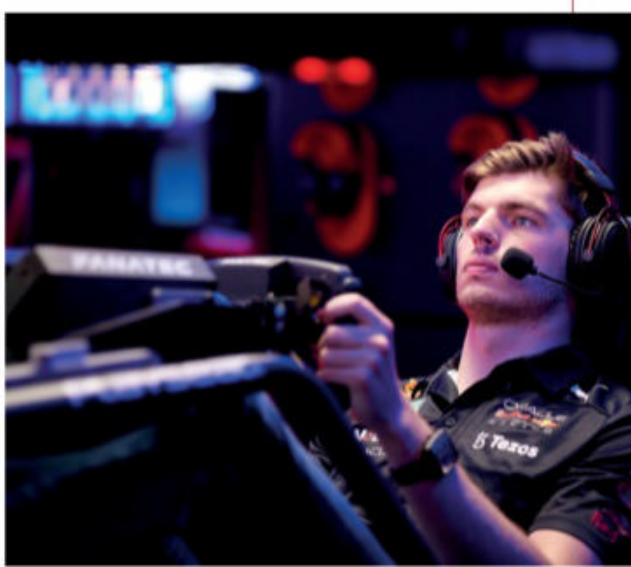
The relationship between the Vermeulen and Verstappen households extends beyond F1. Their interests in GT3 are set to expand with the launch of a team by 2025. Meanwhile the Verstappen Racing business supports Raymond's son, 21-year-old Thierry Vermeulen, currently competing in DTM and GT World Challenge, as well as Jos Verstappen's rallying activities.

The management relationship is very close. There is no burgeoning entourage of gatekeepers and bodyguards between the pair.

Both the near and long-term future for Max Verstappen centres on racing, winning more Formula 1 world championship titles and building upon the business opportunities that brings. In much the same way that Hamilton dominated the 2010s and Schumacher the decade before that, we are now in an era defined by Verstappen. With that will come untold opportunities to continue growing a family dynasty rooted in motor racing. 



**Max's manager is Raymond Vermuelen (above, left). The Jumbo deal (above) is ending but a love of gaming (below) has worked out well**





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# HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO





The massed ranks of orange shirts in the grandstands (plus the odd flare or 10) at European grands prix demonstrate Max Verstappen's massive home support. But this isn't a case of a country discovering Formula 1 overnight because of one person. Formula 1 fever has been growing, in need of an outlet, for many years – despite the faltering support of domestic sponsors...

WORDS MARCUS SIMMONS PICTURES  AND SHUTTERSTOCK



**THE DUTCH FLAGS, EMBLAZONED** with the name of the country's motorsport hero, flew as the crowd's favourite sped to victory around Zandvoort. There were an estimated 60,000-plus of them, putting the attendance of many grands prix to shame. But this wasn't a GP. It wasn't even Formula 1. It was the 1993 Marlboro Masters of Formula 3. And the flags proclaimed 'Jos The Boss' in honour of the young Verstappen who, they were sure, was about to take the world of F1 by storm.

The Netherlands and Zandvoort had lost their Grand Prix after the 1985 race, yet still the country retained a motorsport culture and was crying out for an F1 star. "We never had a talent that big in our country," reflects Frits van Amersfoort, whose first visit to a racetrack was for the 1967 Dutch GP, got into the sport by running the Formula Ford car of Huub Rothengatter, and had overseen Verstappen – who was managed by Rothengatter, by now an ex-F1 Spirit, Osella and Zakspeed battler – to the 1992 Benelux Opel Lotus title. "Of course we had F1 drivers in the past – the most known one was Jan Lammers, and we also had Huub. But they were hardly successful, and all of a sudden we had Jos who was highly successful in F3, helped by an immense campaign organised by Huub. As Jos came from the southern province of Limburg, he already had the whole province behind him and that made him very popular."

Verstappen made it to the F1 grid in 1994, but it was in a Benetton team alongside Michael Schumacher. "Jos was pretty good but he ran against Michael, and he just had the 3, 4, 5% more ability than Jos," points out John 'Hans' Hugenholtz Jr, a racer who has been a prime advocate of helping young Dutch talent, and whose father was managing director of the Zandvoort track from 1949-73, and designed circuits at Suzuka, Jarama and Zolder.

Hugenholtz Sr is also immortalised in the naming of the banked left-hand hairpin behind the Zandvoort paddock, Hugenholtzbocht: "The circuit at the time was owned by the local town and they always ran short of budget, so they couldn't give my father a proper present but they gave him a corner – much better than getting a gold watch or a silver pen or whatever!"

Verstappen and others of his generation

– including the late Marcel Albers, killed at Thruxton in an F3 crash in 1992, and Tom Coronel, who got so close to entering F1 with Arrows in 2000 – were beneficiaries of sponsorship from Marlboro, which carried them into drives at Van Amersfoort Racing. "When I took the benefit of the Marlboro backing there was no GP anymore, so there was lots of finance available to be invested in other series," explains van Amersfoort. "Everybody meaning something in Dutch motorsport would know where to find Marlboro's Amstelveen headquarters."

"That's also maybe the reason why the Masters of F3 took such a step because Marlboro was the biggest sponsor ever. And one reason is that it was free admission – we Dutch are renowned for not wanting to spend a lot of money!"

When the ban on tobacco advertising hit, it proved a hammer blow for aspiring Dutch racers. "After Marlboro left – because they had to! – nearly the whole of motorsport in Holland died because of that," says van Amersfoort, whose VAR team went on to run Max Verstappen in F3 in 2014, his first season in cars. "The basic problem for Dutch drivers without family funding is finance. For Max and the Verstappen family it's so easy to find sponsorship now but, in the beginning, after Max and Jos agreed to start with us, we couldn't find anybody to finance the car. That's also Dutch – now they're all ready to jump on a rolling train and take the benefit from it. But in the beginning when it's still all unsecure and uncertain, they won't do it."

The Dutch federation – the KNAF – attempted to plug the gap by introducing its Talent First scheme, with van Amersfoort's right-hand man and commercial boss Rob Niessink as a prime mover. "The winner got a free season of Formula Ford with us, and it ended with a free season for Giedo van der Garde in Formula Renault," explains van Amersfoort. "But the federation needed the board to approve everything and the investment, and they were never able to find a big sponsor for that."

Talent First still exists, but doesn't offer any significant funding, and this proved a frustration to Hugenholtz, who joined the KNAF and attempted to launch a Dutch Formula 4 series in the mid-2010s. "The reason I left KNAF was because they didn't really understand what it takes to help young drivers," he says. "They said, 'We cannot just give money', but it's very simple – if you want to support young drivers, what you've got to do is provide testing facilities, maybe pay for tyres, maybe pay for a team to provide a car, stuff like that."

In the meantime, Dutch drivers van der Garde, ▶



Christijan Albers (another to enjoy Marlboro support with VAR, but who got sidetracked into the DTM with Mercedes before belatedly entering F1) and Robert Doornbos made it to the F1 grid, but never got properly established. Robin Frijns – also from Limburg – blazed a Verstappen-style supernova through the junior categories, tested

**The Verstappens have been the story of Dutch F1 hopes since the early 1990s with Max managing to do what his dad couldn't**



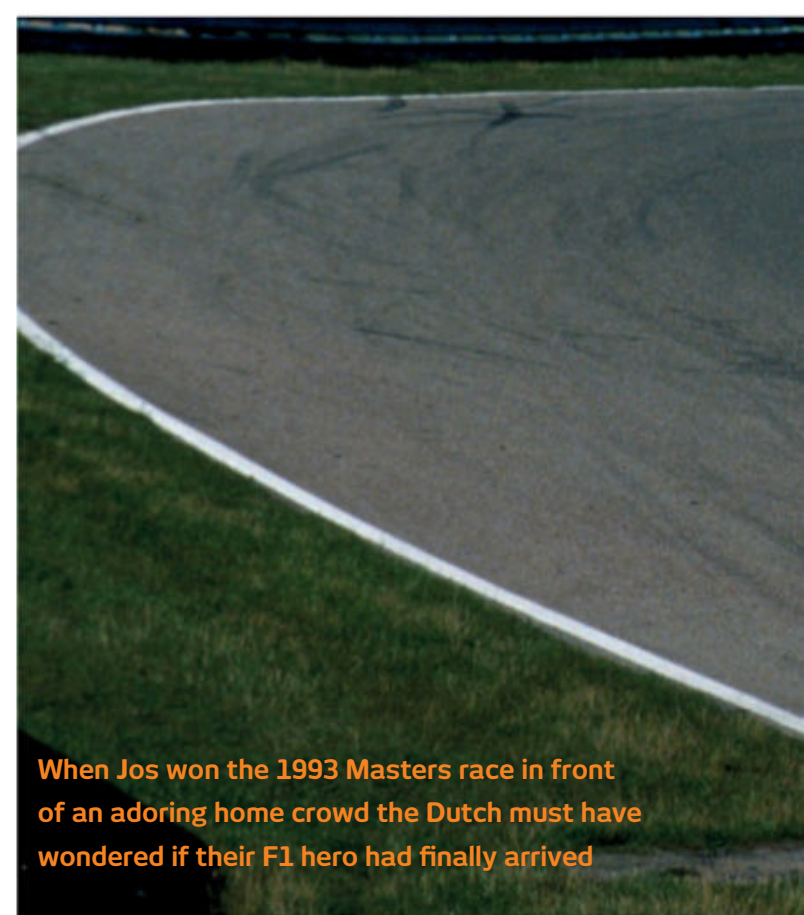
**Jos made it into F1 at his first opportunity in 1994, and with one of the best teams, only to come up against team-mate Michael Schumacher**

for Red Bull and Sauber and took part in FP1 sessions for Caterham, yet somehow the door remained shut. And then, more recently, there's the curious case of Nyck de Vries.

Van Amersfoort believes there's an element of the Dutch psyche whereby sporting success should be guaranteed, and it's difficult to get to grips with the concept of taking a step back before two forward. "When the Dutch national football

team starts the World Cup, we always think we will win it – and we never did," he laughs. "That's Dutch. They feel that they want to be the best from the beginning."

It's been tough, therefore, for Dutch drivers to establish themselves in F1. The first regular was the popular nobleman Carel de Beaufort, who raced privateer Porsches in patriotic orange under the Ecurie Maarsbergen banner before he was killed, aged 30, in the 1964 German GP. Roelof Wunderink, Boy Hayje and Michael Bleekemolen crept into the field in the 1970s, after Le Mans 24 Hours winner Gijs van Lennep



**When Jos won the 1993 Masters race in front of an adoring home crowd the Dutch must have wondered if their F1 hero had finally arrived**

had carved out his own small niche in F1 history by, at the 1973 Dutch GP, becoming the first driver to score a point in a car constructed by Frank Williams. But it was Jan Lammers, as the reigning European Formula 3 champion, who gave real hope when he raised enough sponsorship to compete with Shadow in 1979.

"Even in those days for Jan, it was a matter of finance," says Hugenholtz, who has worked with Lammers in sportscar racing. "Jan was very good – he had some astonishing results in mediocre cars, the ATS and some of the others. I think of the drivers pre-Jos Verstappen, Jan was the best. He was better than Gijs van Lennep, but Gijs was an endurance racer, not an F1 racer. So I think Jan could have got further if he'd got in the right team at the right moment, absolutely."

Between the Verstappens, there was Coronel, who as champion of Japan's flagship Formula Nippon series in 1999 arguably deserved a shot at F1. More recently, he's a regular on the world touring car scene and the Dakar Rally and has

**"DUTCH PEOPLE WANT TO JOIN SOMEBODY WHO IS WINNING, AND NOT SOMEONE HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME. NOW THAT MAX IS ON A HIGH, WE TEND TO FORGET THAT WE ALSO HAVE A NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM"** FRITS VAN AMERSFOORT





F1 demonstrations were mega-popular at the free Masters of F3 meetings, with Marlboro-backed Ferrari there in 2000



presented a Dutch version of *Top Gear* with twin brother Tim, another ex-Marlboro/VAR hopeful.

“Tom is a great driver, he was my co-driver at Le Mans and other events, but I don’t think he would have made it to the top in Formula 1,” Hugenholtz reckons. “If you look at it, the 30 who are racing or testing in F1 are the best in the world, apart from maybe looking at America. The chance of getting in there is really slim, or you’ve got to have a lot of money, but that doesn’t mean you’re a good driver!”

So what shape is the country in for a post-Max Verstappen future in F1? Richard Verschoor is an F2 race winner with VAR, ditto Kas Haverkort two steps down in Formula Regional. Hugenholtz is realistic, but only in the sense that there is likely no nation producing a driver good enough to operate at Verstappen’s level, to galvanise a whole population behind him. “Sergio Pérez is a great driver – he just happened to run into Max,” he points out. “If you look at Max his ability is at such a high level even worldwide there are very



Between the two Verstappens Tom Coronel deserved a chance in F1 after winning the Formula Nippon championship in 1999

few people who can challenge him.”

This is to such an extent that the pressure could be off the Netherlands’ football team for the 2026 Euros and 2028 World Cup. “Dutch people want to join somebody who is winning, and not

Marcel Albers benefited from Marlboro backing and was thought to be a potential star, only to be killed in an F3 race at Thruxton in 1992



someone who is having a difficult time,” says van Amersfoort. “So now that Max is on a high, we tend to forget that we also have a national football team because Max is now the man! That’s the truth – they all want to go with a champion.”







# DANIEL RICCIARDO

Back where he first made his name in Formula 1, Daniel Ricciardo says he's focusing on enjoying his comeback and encouraging the AlphaTauri team to think differently... while not going into the data too exhaustively

## How do you reflect on the Hungarian Grand Prix, your first race back on the front line?

I made a point to enjoy it all. Even the media day, there was a lot of attention. I joked that it was like I'd won a world championship. There was so much interest, but it was something you have to soak up and enjoy. I was knackered so on the Monday, I was very low-key and reflected on it. I think the main thing was, yes, I was happy with my performance. It was a more enjoyable experience than I'd probably found myself in during the last year or so. That was really important. A lot of the time we're driven so much by the result. Our happiness is dictated by whether we get a podium or not. But to be happy with not even points in 13th is the way I want to go racing now. Obviously, I'm still very results-driven, but I felt like I'd done everything I needed to.

## Just how hard was it to jump straight into a car you'd never driven before?

I know there's going to be more for me to learn with the car. We hadn't done many long runs before the race. I was probably a little bit behind and still learning about the car with fuel and as the tyres got old. Coming into the race, I still thought it was going to be tricky. Each stint I did got better and better. So, if I can keep learning, and I think that naturally will happen with more time in the car and working with the engineers, I hope it gets better. Obviously better and better doesn't mean we'll eventually be winning races by October or something. But I want to really keep learning and feel comfortable. Although the

AlphaTauri hasn't got the grip of the Red Bull, it still gave me enough feeling to know what I can and can't do with it. That was important for me.

## What was your first real-world impression of driving the AT04?

Before the rain came in FP1 in Budapest, I did one lap and already in that one lap I felt like I had a good feeling of the car. I immediately drew some confidence from it. I felt like I was getting the feedback that maybe I would expect. I expect still some challenges along the way. But the first impression was that it did give me a little bit more of a familiar feeling. I was hoping to feel something like that.

## After Budapest, did you analyse your driving in the detail that McLaren is known for?

I don't want to get into that detail ever again! Even through year one at McLaren [in 2021], I learned we were going into it too much. We needed to change the approach. It was all in everyone's best interests trying to make it work. But I felt like I'd come to the realisation that it wasn't for me. There were definitely things after

Hungary that I worked on and Yuki Tsunoda was a good reference, especially coming out the box: little bits of driving and where the car could be on the limit in some areas of the track. There were things the engineers were showing me. There was some learning to be had but also, they wanted to see how I drive and go from there. They were letting me drive naturally. That was cool.

## AlphaTauri, née Toro Rosso, has traditionally turned to younger drivers. What can your experience offer?

To have not only someone who has been in Formula 1 for this long, but also has driven for other teams, probably gets them thinking a little bit more. I'm going to try and maybe get them to think a little bit more outside the box in some areas. They were excited to have me and also hear what I had to say in the briefings. I tried not to hog the microphone because I don't want to dish 100 things out on the first weekend. There was certainly some curiosity about what I feel, what I felt before and how they can learn and build. It's still a relatively small team.

## Ultimately, was taking time out from the F1 limelight right for you?

Yeah. Even if it wasn't the half-year I expected, I kind of reset myself and I feel energised again. I remember having a conversation with Fernando Alonso two years ago now. I wasn't thinking of taking a break. But we were having a chat on a flight. He said the break for him was one of the best things he ever did. That got me thinking if I ever feel I need it, not to be too scared of it.

**EVEN IF IT WASN'T THE  
HALF-YEAR I EXPECTED,  
I KIND OF RESET MYSELF AND  
I FEEL ENERGISED AGAIN**



# THE LONG INTERVIEW

WORDS STUART COOLING  
PORTRAITS ANDY HONE

# THIS IS

# ALEX WURZ

A BMX world champion at the age of 12, podium finisher for Benetton and Williams in Formula 1, serial test jockey for some of Adrian Newey's most outlandish car designs, and a double Le Mans winner – Alex Wurz packed a lot into a racing career. And he's still one of F1's most influential voices today as chairman of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association









**here are those who used** to say former driver Alex Wurz ruined Formula 1. He was, after all, among the key architects of the halo – back when it was fashionable among the opinionati to heap ordure upon a safety development which has now saved several lives (and, as Alex says, “hasn’t lost a single fan”). It’s little wonder that a man who still holds the record for the fastest F1 accident of all time – he was travelling at 189mph

when an incorrectly mounted tyre burst at a Paul Ricard test – should be an advocate of safety, with a firm grip on the baton once held by Sir Jackie Stewart.

Why, you ask, does a driver who retired from F1 16 years ago still quietly wield so much influence? Because he’s respected by all the people who matter, from the championship’s stakeholders and power-brokers to the competitors themselves. Being the GPDA chairman is a tough job, but somebody’s got to do it...

**GP Racing:** Your dad did rallycross so racing was always in the family. At what point did you decide that motor racing was going to be for you rather than BMX?

**Alex Wurz:** There was no real karting scene in Austria. I’d always said I want to be a racecar driver because my dad was a racing driver, and my friend’s dad as well. But BMX came along and I did it for a few years until someone turned up in my dad’s driving centre [Wurz Sr ran a driver training company] and said, “Can I run in an engine for this go kart?” I saw it and said to my dad, “This is better than pushing pedals around!” I had a few laps in it and that’s how I started karting. I was already 15 so it was quite a late start – like I said, there was nothing in Austria, the guy who came to run in his engine raced in Germany.

So then I got hooked on karting. I was already too tall and too heavy for the rules but anyway, we bought a two-year-old kart and I did the mechanics myself. It was very low budget, but that was okay because I’d done a lot of driving in my father’s training centres so I learnt vehicle dynamics and tyre science. And that proved later to be a very good advantage.

**GPR:** Budget seemed to be an issue in single-seaters and you ended up in touring cars with Reinhold Joest’s team, and that led to a drive at Le Mans and a victory that was probably pivotal to your career. But that car wasn’t expected to win, was it? It was a Jaguar XJR-14 chassis recycled as a Porsche for IMSA racing, but the Americans had screwed Porsche by changing the rules...

**AW:** I did the International Touring Car championship in a two-year-old car [in 1996], paid for by Opel Austria. It was the



**Wurz opened up on many subjects, including why he’s still involved in F1 years after he last raced in it**

only thing I could do other than become a driver trainer for my dad’s business. I was pushing for single-seaters, trying to have meetings with F1 team bosses, trying to find money for F3000. The ITC team was run by Reinhold Joest, who was already very successful at Le Mans. I spent a lot of time in the factory, just to bond with the mechanics and hoping to get a better car. And Joest noticed this.

I was always talking to him about his car collection. One day he said, “I want to show you something.” We went to the other garage and he showed me this Jaguar chassis with the roof cut off. He told me it was a Porsche project, the rules didn’t permit it anymore [in IMSA] but he could race it at Le Mans as a semi-factory entry. And then, OK, anyway, that was it – he said he already has six drivers. Thank you for teasing me!

Then another day he called and asked if I could come to Paul Ricard because he was doing an endurance test and one of the drivers had a fever. So I made my way there and it was like the middle of the night when I got there. I was supposed to drive the next day and then they said, “You can start now.” OK, it’s dark, I’ve never been to this circuit, and it’s really fast. One of the other drivers – Pierluigi Martini – explained the layout to me and I went out. What else could I do? And maybe I should have played a lottery that day because on the third lap I was the fastest in the test. Years later Ralf Jüttner [technical director] told me they checked the data because they didn’t believe it – they thought “Is this guy cutting the chicane?” So it was all cool, I felt super-privileged, and four weeks later I got a call to do another test, then Reinhold offered me a race seat.





But before that I met Flavio [Briatore, Benetton F1 boss] and we were begging to have a test or some sort of support. I felt he wanted to cut the meeting short – he knew who I was from F3 and that I’d screwed up the title. He asked me what I was doing next and I said Le Mans. “If you win Le Mans you can have the test,” he said. It was a two-minute meeting – but to be fair, the Monday after winning Le Mans I got a fax inviting me to an end-of-season shoot-out at Estoril with Giancarlo Fisichella, Jarno Trulli and Paul Tracy. And it all went from there.

**GPR:** Is it true that when you first got in contact with Flavio he said, “Who the fuck are you?”

**AW:** Most likely, yeah!

**GPR:** You did three GPs in 1997 substituting for Gerhard Berger [who had a sinus infection]. Being tall was a problem

**After winning Le Mans in 1996 his promised Benetton test materialised and he made his F1 debut in 1997**

in terms of fitting in the car – is it true that Flavio wanted to have your legs broken and reset to make you shorter?

**AW:** That was Nick Wirth [Benetton chief designer]. He did a spreadsheet showing it would be cheaper to operate on me, taking one and a half inches out of my legs, than change the car. This was the second year and the car [the B199] wasn’t just tight, it was overweight.

**GPR:** You had obviously impressed enough while substituting for Gerhard to get a full-time drive. And then the results were good at first. How exciting was it, to have thought your career was going into touring cars, and then getting a break in F1?

**AW:** In a way lucky but sometimes you have to make your own luck. And when these one-off moments arise, you have to show up. It’s a performance-driven world and nobody is looking for another Austrian, they’re looking for a guy who can do the job. So yeah, I was super-happy – 1998 was a good year generally for Benetton. They were super-successful with Michael [Schumacher] then they had a recession [in 1996 and ’97], lost budget and then kind of had a counter curve with Giancarlo and me. I know now in the second part of 98, I was starting to experiment a little bit too much with setup when I should have focused on the driving.

**GPR:** Was this when you were approached by Ferrari?

**AW:** In the first half of the year I was P4 or P5 in most races –

**THEY CHECKED THE DATA BECAUSE THEY DIDN’T BELIEVE IT – THEY THOUGHT “IS THIS GUY CUTTING THE CHICANE?”**





basically just behind the McLarens and Ferraris, sometimes ahead of [Eddie] Irvine. And then I got a fax saying I must visit Maranello and meet [Ferrari team principal] Jean Todt in his private villa.

I had to stop at a certain toll gate on the side of the autostrada, then follow a yellow Fiat to a fuel station. Then from there, follow a red Alfa Romeo – Stefano Domenicali was driving – and he dropped me at Jean Todt’s house. We talked. It wasn’t that he was offering me a contract right there – he said, “We’re looking at you, we think you will fit very well.” So it was a very clear approach. But at the time all the talk at Benetton was very positive that we would be fighting for wins, so I told Jean I wanted to finish my three-year contract but we should stay in contact. In hindsight I should have taken the opportunity...

**GPR:** Then the 1999 Benetton had all sorts of technology on it that didn’t really work.

**AW:** They started to be very creative, which was very interesting. Fantastic for the spirit of motor racing, a very clever idea and system – Front Torque Transfer [a viscous coupling which helped prevent the inside-front wheel locking under braking for a corner]. On some tracks it was really



In only his third race in F1, the 1997 British GP, Wurz claimed his first podium. But with Gerhard Berger fit again he returned to his reserve role with Benetton for the rest of the season

FIRST RACE, QUALIFYING, I STOOD ON THE SCALES, 12KG OVER THE WEIGHT LIMIT. AT THE END I WAS SIX KILOS OVERWEIGHT. AT THE TIME I COULDN’T TALK ABOUT IT

good, but it was too heavy – I could never run it. So I was in any case overweight – first race, qualifying, I stood on the scales, 12kg over the weight limit [since 1995 the minimum weight had included car and driver]. And then in the next half of the season I was eight, at the end I was six kilos overweight. At the time, I couldn’t talk about it.

On an average circuit that’s about three tenths. The average gap to Fisichella in qualifying was two tenths and on race pace I was always better than I was in qualifying. So, weight-corrected, a good season but I had no chance to use ballast to play with weight distribution and I didn’t have the FTT. It was painful – people ask why you’re behind and you want to say it’s just the laws of physics, it has nothing to do with talent.

**GPR:** Was it purely because of your height? Because you were quite skinny.

**AW:** Maybe I look skinny but I’m not that lightweight. Years later when Frank Williams asked me about my weight and size, he said the ratio was a bit on the high side, so I said, “Yeah, that’s because I have proper balls.” He was laughing and then he called me back and told me I had the drive. But we’ve made the jump forward in time...

**GPR:** We have. Let’s go back – after Benetton you went to McLaren as test driver in 2001. Is it the case that you were up for the race drive in 2002?

**AW:** I could have gone to other teams to race – Prost and Arrows. But I decided to go all in, go to McLaren and see maybe if there was a chance to kickstart my career, convince them and get the race seat. So I put a lot of effort in. I had an amazing time there. In the second year I got so comfortable with the car we had one lap record after the other in testing. All was good.

Adrian Newey was in favour of giving me the seat [vacated by Mika Häkkinen], Martin Whitmarsh was in line with that. What we didn’t know was that Ron Dennis was trying to get









Kimi Räikkönen out of Sauber. And it was two or three weeks of parallel universe. I was doing a long run in testing at Monza when Martin called me on the radio to come in. He said, “I just want to let you know, we’re taking the option on you to race.” I said, “You know, I could have finished the long run, Martin...” But he was very excited.

Then it went a bit quiet. I started to work out there was something going on. I found out Ron was doing the deal with Peter Sauber. So I knew what the salary in my race contract would be, I found out what Ron was offering Peter to release Kimi, and I did the maths. I texted Peter: “I’ll pay you what Ron is offering you as a release fee, and you can keep Kimi, you’ll make money and I’ll get my contract.”

Anyway he didn’t text back. It was a bit of a character-building time. Shit happens – if you go for the stars, then sometimes you end up in the trees.

**GPR:** Adrian Newey cars are technically ambitious but notoriously but notoriously tight on space. The MP4-18 which never raced, for instance. How was it to drive?

**AW:** I don’t mind sideways tight but my knees have to go somewhere, usually quite high. So for example, I was once called by BMW to sign for them but the car was already designed and crash-tested – Mario Theissen [team principal] said, “If you don’t fit, we have a problem because we’re late.” So it was impossible and the contract went to Robert Kubica. Adrian designed the MP4-18 so I could fit. The first test at Paul Ricard, the car was difficult but faster than the MP4-17 – which was a very fast car, my favourite race car of all time. And that was the only time it was faster.

We did another test a week later in Jerez. Normally Turn 4 is flat. So on the third lap I went flat and in the middle of the corner there was big snap of oversteer – bang! – into the wall. The fuel hose broke, there was fire, it got effing hot in a split second. They came up with theories that I just was too hyper-motivated – but five weeks before, in the old car, I did it flat in the first lap. The corner wasn’t an issue.

In fact the floor collapsed off and then stalled. The key metrics for this car were aero and low centre of gravity – I had



After years as a McLaren tester and some other false starts Wurz finally made it back to an F1 race seat in 2007 with Williams. In Canada he scored his third and final podium

“WHEN FRANK WILLIAMS ASKED ME ABOUT MY WEIGHT AND SIZE, HE SAID THE RATIO WAS A BIT ON THE HIGH SIDE. I SAID, “THAT’S BECAUSE I HAVE PROPER BALLS”

Although he rolled his Benetton at the start of the 1998 Canadian GP, Wurz got into the spare for the restart and finished fourth. This sort of form led to an interest from Ferrari for 1999

an engine blow because it was mounted so low, the oil started to foam in the reservoir. This happened two or three times. The conrod went out of the block and cut the brake line so I had no brakes. Pedro de la Rosa had the same thing.

At Silverstone, going through Maggotts/Becketts, there was so much load on the uprights going through there, and they were lightweight construction – the wheelnuts would fly off. Four times! Then I lost the car at Bridge – into the wall, huge shunt, everything off the car.

I got back to the motorhome, phoned Martin and said, “I really apologise but this is the last time I’m driving this car.” He said, “I expected this call.”

The car was trendsetting. It was just too early, pushing the boundaries of materials and knowledge at the time. ▶





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**GPR:** So BMW didn't happen. You found your way back in with Williams, testing through 2006 then racing the year after. What sold you to Frank?

**AW:** I had nowhere to go in 2006. I thought, "Maybe this is it." Frank called me up and said, "We need to up our game as a team, we're lagging in testing expertise, would you consider it?"

It was 12 December so I said yes! I had the interview at 11 in the morning, he really did laugh about the balls thing, then he said, "OK, come back in two hours." I went to the next village to buy parsnips. My wife is British and she'd told me to get them for Christmas dinner – we don't have them in Monaco.

Frank phoned and said, "Can you come up?" He thought I was just downstairs. I said, "Frank, I'm in a supermarket, buying parsnips." Silence. Then booming laughter – Patrick Head was there. They offered me this contract and said if I did a good job I could race the year after. And this did happen.

**GPR:** 2007 was a strange year. In Canada you went from the back end of the grid to a podium with your rear wing in pieces. Then just one more points finish and you left before the end.

**AW:** It was an interesting season. In 2007 F1 went to a spec Bridgestone tyre which had a very weak front end. I want a front which when I look at it, it turns in. I got very cranky with it. And it really still irritates me now.

Nico [Rosberg] always had an edge of one or two tenths in quali, which meant sometimes he made it through to Q2 or Q3 and I didn't. I did a lot of overtakes but was always racing out of position. I had to be honest with myself – if I can't change my driving style for this shitty front tyre it's not good enough. I got angry with myself, thinking, "You're just a tosser, not fixing your style for one lap." I was really honest with Frank. And he was too. He said he wanted to try Kazuki [Nakajima] and we came to an arrangement. It helped the team – and I signed with Peugeot [for its sportscar programme] very quickly.

**GPR:** You went on to win Le Mans again. But you've also stayed involved in F1 via the Grand Prix Drivers Association. How did that come about?

**AW:** I had TV work in F1 so I was going to GPs. One day


Alex grew his hair long in early 2005 when a McLaren test driver, a move that didn't sit well with his fastidious boss Ron Dennis

Wurz was part of the GPDA when he was an F1 driver and has remained involved as its chair since 2014



ONE DAY SEBASTIAN VETTEL SAID TO ME, "THE DRIVERS NEED TO BE MORE UNITED, IT'S TIME TO REVIVE THE GPDA. WOULD YOU HELP ME?"

Sebastian Vettel said to me, "The drivers need to be more united, it's time to revive the GPDA. Would you help me?" I said I'd done it before, I didn't want to do it again, but I'd talk to them all. We arranged a meeting to organise it – it was at the circuit hotel at Suzuka and all the drivers came. Jules Bianchi was there and spoke a lot, he was very interested, and afterwards he said, "Alex, while you said you wouldn't do it [be the chairman], it would be very good if you could help us."

Then on the Sunday he had his accident. Later Jean Todt called and asked me to be part of the investigation panel to represent the drivers. I found myself suddenly in the role – the drivers said, "Well, you're doing it now, could you continue?" And that's how it began. Drivers are competitors but it's really important they unite to have a voice. 



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# LANCE STROLL

The Aston Martin driver opens up about the difficulties of competing with steel pins in his wrist, and explains why he's become so outspoken about the dangers of racing in wet weather...

**After such an impressive start to the campaign, Aston Martin's Red Bull-worrying form seemed to tail off in the lead-up to the summer break. What happened?**

We're not where we want to be. We started the season very strong: the second or third-fastest car in some races depending on the track. But in more recent weekends, they've been more challenging for us. So, we definitely have a few things to work on to get back to where we want to be. That being said, it's been a huge step up from last year and I know the team is motivated to keep pushing for more.

**Where has the car performance dipped and how can you retrieve it?**

Well, going around the corners faster and down the straights faster – that always helps! No, I think it's just a lot of little details. It's the usual stuff: working around some of the limitations of the car, balance through the corner, finding some more downforce. A lot of the other teams caught up so it's much tighter now. We have to try and make another step in the second half of the season to get back to that really competitive car we had at the start of the year. We've made some little mods recently, which have definitely helped. But we're still not as quick as we want to be.

**At the start of the season there was a question mark hanging over your fitness because of the wrist injuries sustained in that nasty cycling crash. Did your recovery go as doctors and trainers had hoped?**

Driving a Formula 1 car 12 days after breaking my bones was not what the doctors would have liked me to do! But I did it anyway. It was a very aggressive return, but I knew we had a good car. I wanted to get back in the car and I felt like

I was ready to do it. And it sucked for the first few races. Definitely I was in a lot of pain. But I'm feeling much better now.

**Off-track, you helped christen the team's new Silverstone factory by performing a burnout through the building aboard a 2021 car. What's the new home like?**

It's incredible. It's incredibly exciting for everyone at Aston Martin Racing. It's a much better working environment than what we've been in for many years. I also just think it's a really exciting opportunity to grow as a team going forward and to expand and be better and build better cars. It's exciting times for us as a team.

**Team-mate Fernando Alonso celebrated his 42nd birthday during the Belgian weekend. How have you rated his endurance and performances having now seen them up close?**

He's pretty impressive for an old guy, that's for sure! No, he's been doing very well. The results speak for themselves. He's on top of his game and he's enjoying driving the car. He's physically fit, mentally in a great place. It goes to show, if you look after yourself you can go for a long time.

**How's the relationship between you two?**

I definitely enjoy working alongside him.

**DRIVING AN F1 CAR 12 DAYS AFTER BREAKING MY BONES WAS NOT WHAT THE DOCTORS WOULD HAVE LIKED ME TO DO**

Fernando is incredibly talented, knowledgeable, experienced and hungry to get the most out of himself every day. He's been doing that for a long time. Just to see that determination and focus and motivation every day, I have a lot of respect for that. We've been having a great relationship. There's the sense that we're both trying to get more out of the car every weekend and, as a team, collectively, just trying to come up with more ideas, better ideas and how to improve the setup. I think that dynamic has been really good.

**You've spoken passionately about the need for safety improvements following the death of 18-year-old Formula Regional European Championship driver Dilano van 't Hoff at Spa in July. How big a cause for concern is visibility in wet conditions?**

It's a huge safety issue at the moment and it needs to be addressed. I can recall many races over the past few years in F1 where you just cannot see anything when you're behind a car.

It's extremely dangerous. If someone has an incident in front of you and is sideways in the middle of the track, you just can't see where you're going. We shouldn't be racing in those conditions.

**To that end, do you support the FIA's recent development and early testing of the so-called 'spray guards'?**

It definitely is something that, if it works, has to be put on the cars as quickly as possible. If it doesn't work, we shouldn't be putting ourselves in situations where we're racing in conditions where we can't see. Accidents can happen and they can be really severe. Hopefully it does work and it's a great solution going forward to wet-weather racing.







## THE HUMAN RACE

Alfa Romeo trackside operations engineer Vita Marina explains who does what to make a pitstop lightning-quick

INTERVIEW OLEG KARPOV PICTURE ALFA ROMEO

1

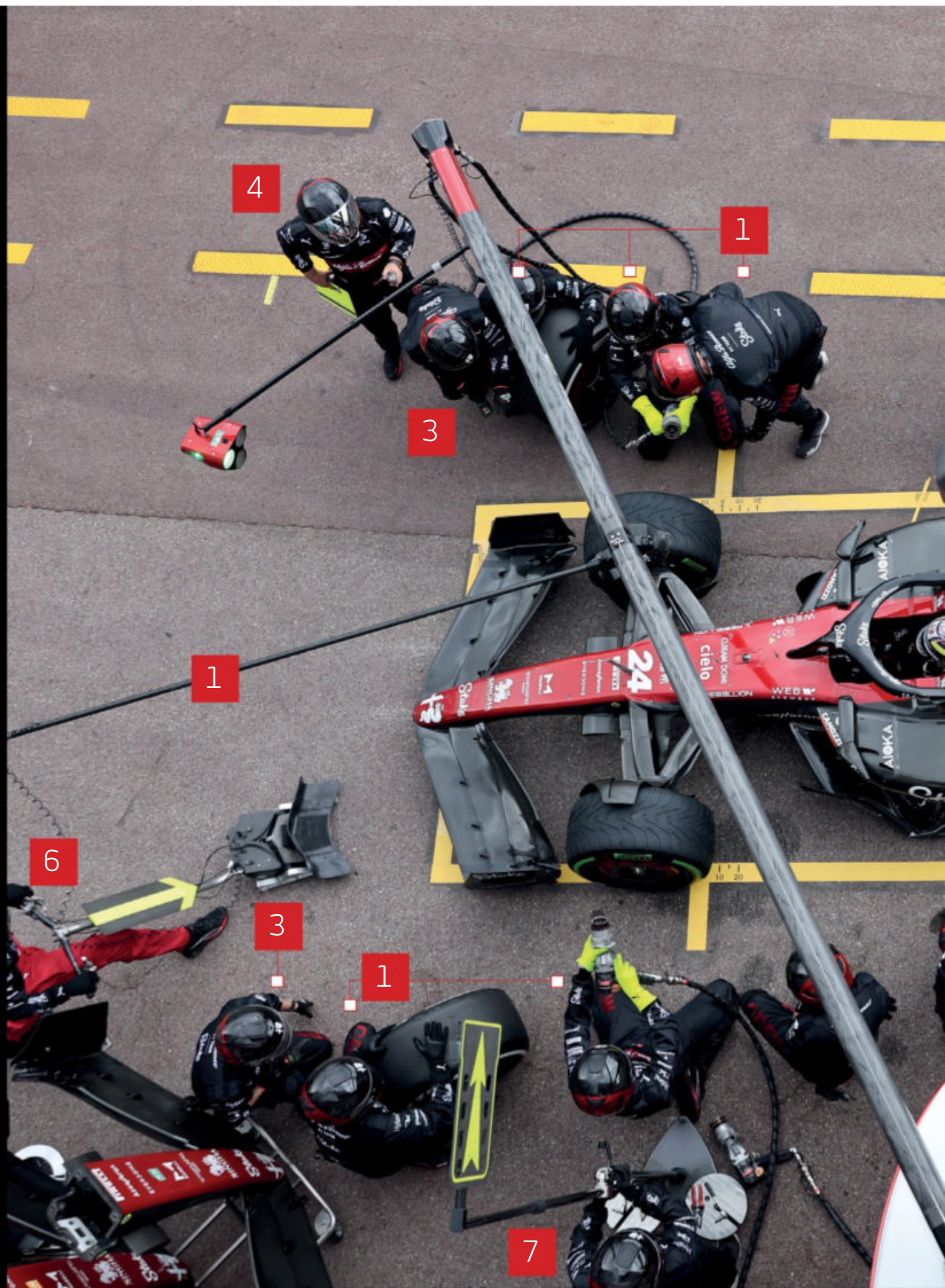
"For a normal pitstop, where we don't have to change the nose or tackle some other issue, we have a crew of 23 people, each with a distinctive role. 12 of those are directly responsible for changing the wheels. There are three guys on each corner: the one taking the wheel off, the gunman, and the other guy who is putting the wheel on."

2

"Then you have two guys on the sides – they're stabilising the car. Because if there's a small miscoordination between the corners, and the wheels aren't coming off at exactly the same time from all four corners, the car starts shaking and then everything becomes very difficult for the guys who weren't the first. So these two guys are always holding the car on both sides. Different teams have varying ways of doing it, but ours hold on by the halo structure. As soon as the car arrives at the position, they grab it, regardless of whether the car is steady or not – if you wait for something to go wrong, it's already a bit too late."

3

"There are two guys at the front who are responsible for the front wing adjust. This of course depends on whether the race engineer



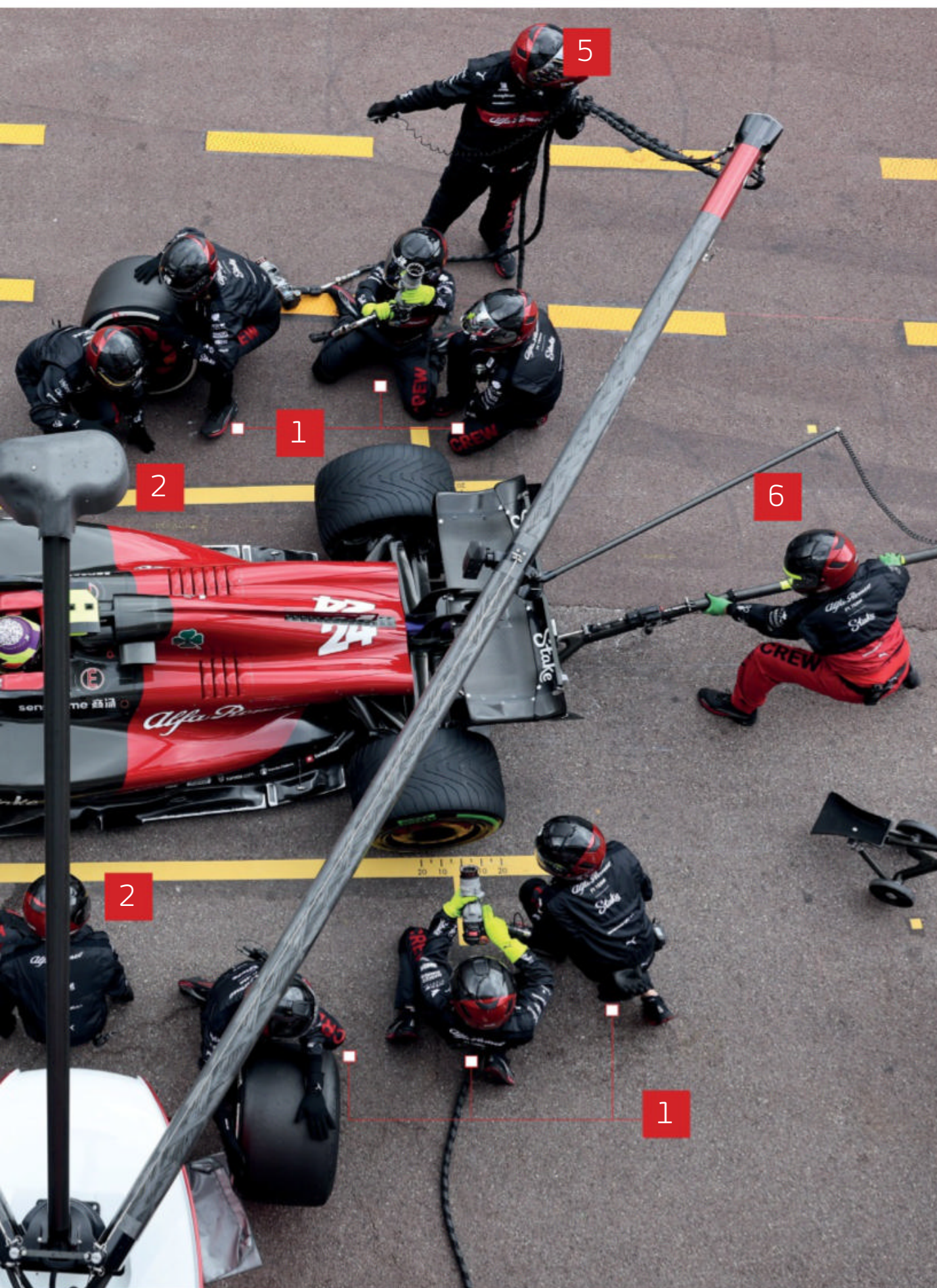
requested to do it or not, but even if there's no front wing adjust needed, they're still available – either to check if there's debris stuck on the front wing or if some other help is needed. After all, sometimes the driver decides absolutely last-second, when he's already in the pitlane, 'Ah no, I do want a front wing adjust', so they have to be ready. The adjustment is needed 95% of the time, because it's almost always necessary – every time

you change the tyre compound, and sometimes even when you change to the same compound, due to track evolution you might want to have a bit more or a bit less front wing."

4

"This is actually the main guy of the pitstop – even though it looks like he does nothing! In the past, it





was literally the lollipop position. Now every team has an electronic release system, so the lollipop is replaced by a remote control with a couple of buttons. And if everything goes well, when the system recognises all the tyres are changed and there are no issues, the car is released automatically. But if something goes wrong, this guy becomes the most important one, because he can hold the car up. As well as, if something

**“THIS IS ACTUALLY THE MAIN GUY OF THE PITSTOP EVEN THOUGH IT LOOKS LIKE HE DOES NOTHING!”**

goes wrong and the system doesn't release the car, but the gunman is 100% sure the wheel nut is tight, he's the only one who has the power to manually release the car. You can see all gunmen have yellow gloves on. In case something goes wrong, the 'lollipop man' needs to understand – in a quarter of a second – whether all four corners completed their job. When the wheel is on, they raise their guns – and this is why their gloves need to be bright, so he immediately spots them.”

5

“Then you have a similar position at the back, the pitlane spotter, who is responsible for not releasing the car into traffic. He's got a remote control in his hand which sends a signal to the traffic light in front of the driver. He's always looking down the pitlane – there's a marker in the pitlane for every team and, when a competitor car passes that marker, he presses a button and the traffic light would either show blue next to green, signalling a car is coming from behind, or even red if it's a very narrow pitlane and we know we absolutely may not release.”

6

“Both in front and at the back there are jackmen – with two more guys behind with spare tools (one you can see on the far right). This is standard practice. Everyone has a second set – so, near each of the gunmen there's a spare gun in case anything goes wrong.

“As you can see both main jacks are connected to the system with wires, so the program is 'aware' of each step: every piece of equipment is connected to it, so the system knows when it's time to release the car.”

7

“Finally, there's a tyre marker. See this little arrow? The guy behind, every time before the pitstop, puts that arrow down – and that's where the driver needs to put his front-left tyre. If he misses it – we call an 'overshoot' or 'undershoot' for the position – it's like a chain reaction that can cause a delay. It's very important how the driver puts the car in the pit box position and how he brakes into position, because this affects everyone's job: the jackmen, the gunmen, and so on. So the driver's role in this is one of the most important ones.”



# MCLAREN





# MP4-22

NOW  
THAT  
WAS  
A  
CAR

Lewis Hamilton's first  
step to greatness



No. 120

WORDS  
STUART CODLING  
PICTURES  
JAMES MANN



**A**t least one of McLaren's drivers could and should have won the 2007 world championship. But, owing to an unnecessary clash of egos between them (in which the team foolishly became a participant), and the steady drip of toxic revelations in the 'Spygate' scandal that year, McLaren was left empty-handed – and \$100million poorer.

What a trajectory. The season began with one of the most extravagant launches ever as McLaren underlined the poaching of title sponsor Vodafone from Ferrari and double world champion driver Fernando Alonso from Renault with a street festival in Valencia. "I'm sure 2007 is going to be a year we're all going to remember," said team boss Ron Dennis in a crisply edited promo video from the event. It would, but not for the reasons Ron anticipated.

Signing Alonso had been a significant coup for Dennis, who swooped in late 2005 after a chance conversation with Alonso following the podium ceremony for the Brazilian GP. The deal was done in secret in a hotel room in Japan a fortnight later – without Alonso's manager (and Renault boss) Flavio Briatore's knowledge. In retrospect, this kind of backdoor chicanery, along with Alonso's increasingly bizarre outbursts later in the 2006 season – where he accused Renault of sabotaging his campaign – should have acted as something of a red flag.

Then again, during that final year at Renault Alonso was fighting with Michael Schumacher and Ferrari – and therefore faced strong legal headwinds in the form of Max Mosley's FIA, which almost invariably resolved any dispute in the Scuderia's favour. Fans and the media even conjured a scabrous alternative acronym for the governing body: Ferrari International Assistance. McLaren chief operating officer Martin Whitmarsh was more diplomatic when he spoke ahead of the MP4-22 launch. "When you take on Ferrari," he said, "you take on City Hall as well."

The MP4-22 was the first McLaren since the 1997 MP4/12 not to feature the touch of Adrian Newey in its conception, since Newey had been escorted from the premises by security when he returned from the 2005 Chinese Grand Prix and informed Dennis he was leaving for Red Bull, just over a month before the first design meetings for the MP4-22



## MCLAREN MP4-22

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CAR

No120



were convened. Nevertheless it bore a clear evolutionary look from its predecessor, even though aero chief Peter Prodromou had been poached by Newey late in development and replaced by Simon Lacey, formerly of Honda.

While the MP4-21 hadn't been a great success, one reason



for this was Michelin's focus on Renault and servicing its requirements for a more rear-biased weight distribution than everyone else. Now all teams were on Bridgestones it was Renault's turn to take a step back. The new control rubber was claimed to have similar properties to Bridgestone's 2004 tyres, offering a wider operating window with lower peak grip than the rubber Ferrari was using at the peak of the tyre war. Pre-season testing suggested rears were the limiting factor, more

prone to degradation and giving cars an oversteer balance.

Another key point of difference in the 2007 F1 season would be the controversial introduction of the so-called 'engine freeze'. Over the previous months the topic of homologation had been the subject of a tug-of-war between FIA president Max Mosley, still on his cost-reduction crusade, and the alliance of car makers involved in F1 whose unity and power Mosley and commercial rights holder Bernie Ecclestone wanted to shatter: the Grand Prix Manufacturers' Association. Mosley had mooted what was in effect a three-year pause on engine development, which the GPMA countered with its 'Indianapolis proposal' – an allowance of one annual update paid for by a central €40m fund. This fell through after Renault, one of the GPMA members, retracted support for the compromise agreement and a number of independent teams refused to be party to it. At the time the indies were scared of the prospect of ▶





manufacturers establishing satellite teams with customer cars, as Red Bull had done with Minardi/Toro Rosso and McLaren was in talks to do with Prodrive. The result was a political mess.

Amid the infighting, Mosley got his way and brought in homologation for 2007. There was a certain logic to his idea: even though he had introduced rules forcing engines to last for more than one weekend, with penalties for unplanned changes, it was still standard practice for manufacturers to revise over 90% of the components within their engines when making development steps between seasons. Homologation aimed to force down this kind of investment just as the 'long-life' rules had attacked manufacturing costs. In the event, manufacturers shamelessly exploited a concession allowing changes for reliability reasons to sneak through performance upgrades.

Mercedes was one of these. After McLaren excelled in pre-season testing, rumours circulated to the effect that Mercedes had found up to 30bhp as well as greater reliability.

McLaren also had a potential advantage in chassis dynamics. Late in 2006 Ferrari had succeeded where McLaren had failed in 2005, persuading the FIA to ban the 'mass damper' Renault had been using to benefit front-end performance. Although chiefly aimed at managing fluctuations in tyre load to benefit

## IT WAS AT THIS RACE WHERE THE FIRST STIRRINGS OF WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS 'SPYGATE' EMERGED



pic to come



mechanical grip, this device – a sprung weight in the nose – also brought aero benefits and was therefore declared illegal as a moveable aerodynamic device. McLaren had licensed a similar but differently executed (ie legal) concept invented at the University of Cambridge by Professor Malcolm Smith, and now enjoyed similar benefits.

Despite a regime change at Ferrari as team principal Jean Todt prepared to hand over to Stefano Domenicali, technical director Ross Brawn went on sabbatical and chief designer Rory Byrne retired, the new F2007 car designed under the aegis of long-time Byrne lieutenant Aldo Costa was also highly competitive. Described as an evolution of the 2006 car it was different in several details, including an 85mm longer wheelbase and a ‘zero keel’ front end.

With Renault in disarray, the 2007 season would be carved up by Ferrari and McLaren on track but the battleground would be political, too. Ron Dennis had a habit of falling out with his star drivers – as Kimi Räikkönen, having defected in rancorous circumstances to Ferrari for 2007, would attest – and it was not long before the relationship with Fernando Alonso foundered.

Alonso arrived believing he would be undisputed number one at McLaren. Since his partner was a rookie, Lewis Hamilton, he had every reason to

## McLAREN MP4-22

NOW  
THAT  
WAS  
A  
CAR

No120



believe so. But Hamilton had been guided by McLaren through Formula Renault, Euro F3 and GP2 with just one small wobble, and had been given extensive ‘mind management’ coaching by mental guru Dr Kerry Spackman. He arrived in F1 better prepared than any previous rookie – and with a strong emotional connection to the team as well as Ron Dennis, whom he had doorstepped at the 1995 *Autosport* Awards.

Having just vanquished Michael Schumacher to win his second world title, Alonso was at the height of his powers. And yet Hamilton ran him close through the opening rounds – later in the season he would even have the better of him in several races. This did not compute for Alonso, who began to feel his team-mate was being favoured. On the other side of the garage, the burningly competitive Hamilton thought he was being held back to spare his team-mate’s ego – an impression inked in his mind when he was ordered to hold station behind Alonso in the latter stages of the Monaco GP (an intervention investigated by the FIA, since team orders were theoretically banned).

It was at this race where the first stirrings of what became known as ‘Spygate’ emerged as Ferrari fired long-time chief mechanic Nigel Stepney on suspicion of trying to sabotage the fuel tanks with detergent. In the coming months it would be revealed he had passed confidential internal design documents to McLaren chief designer Mike Coughlan with the intention of them both attaining senior engineering positions at another team with a wealth of frontrunning IP in their back pockets. Dennis, flabbergasted that one of his own should engage in such duplicity, went into denial and this would prove his – and McLaren’s – undoing.

The twists and turns of Spygate intertwined with the simmering disquiet in the McLaren garage. As the beginning of the Monaco weekend Hamilton was leading the drivers’ standings by dint of a string of podium finishes with Australian GP winner Räikkönen fourth. Monaco restored Alonso to the championship lead but emphatic wins for Hamilton in Canada – his maiden victory – and the USA reversed the order once more. The championship was evolving into a tightly contested smash-and-grab as McLaren and Ferrari sought to maximise results at circuits which favoured their cars: the F2007 had better overall aerodynamic efficiency and tended to flourish at ►





faster tracks, but its front wing was sensitive and tended to lose performance in traffic, while the MP4-22 was better around slow corners and 'switched on' its tyres faster.

Räikkönen inked himself in as a championship contender again mid-season with two vital wins at Magny-Cours and Silverstone. The latter was the most emphatically brilliant as Kimi unleashed clinically brilliant laps at the right moment to overcut first Hamilton and then Alonso at the pitstops.

In Hungary the schism at McLaren was writ large as both drivers disgraced themselves: Hamilton disobeyed a run-plan giving Alonso priority on track during the 'fuel burn' stage of qualifying (it was Fernando's turn), and Alonso responded by blocking him in the pitlane. Lewis was then late to the



## MCLAREN MP4-22

## NOW THAT WAS A CAR

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inevitably tense post-quali team press conference, claiming to have been watching the GP2 race, when in actual fact he had gone to the stewards. Alonso was hit with a grid penalty.

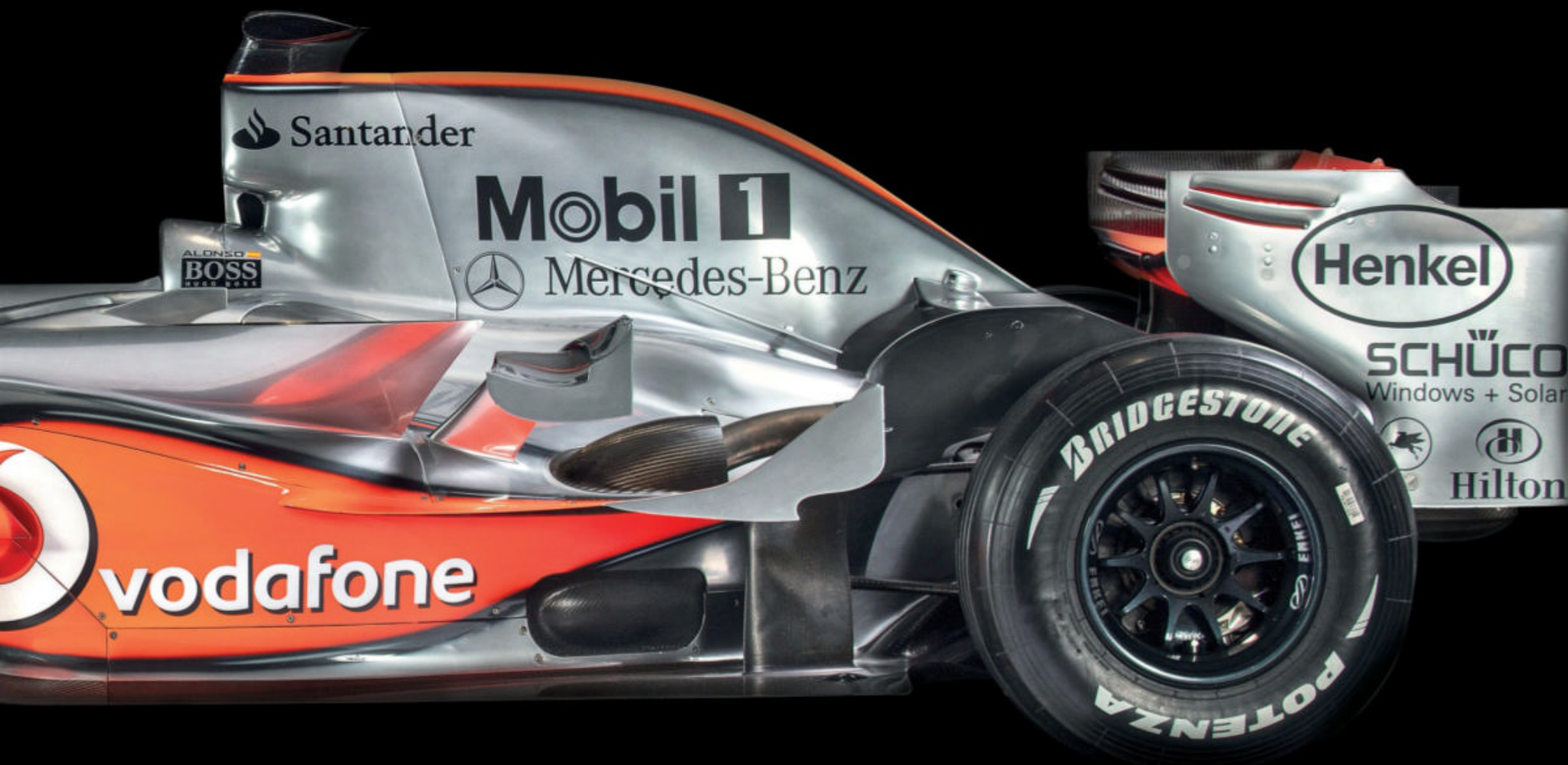
Behind the scenes Alonso threatened Dennis with revealing incriminating information in his emails regarding Spygate if he was not given priority. Though he later withdrew the threat, by then Dennis had apprised Mosley of the conversation.

It was this weekend which ultimately triggered the record \$100million fine and McLaren's constructor points being struck off. Coughlan's possession of the dossier was by now beyond doubt – but the real sting was the disconnect between Dennis's insistence that this was a rogue employee acting alone and the somewhat murkier picture now emerging, one in which rather more McLaren staff were aware of Ferrari secrets.

Victory in Japan while Alonso crashed out meant Hamilton entered the penultimate round, in China, leading the championship with a 12-point buffer over Alonso and 17 over Räikkönen. In Shanghai Alonso's rage boiled over once more as Hamilton outqualified him by over six tenths of a second; in the McLaren team hut Fernando kicked a door off its hinges and suggested to the Spanish media he had been sabotaged by running the wrong tyre pressures (in fact Hamilton was on a lighter load so, fuel-corrected, was only 0.3s faster).

A bizarre race then eventuated in which Hamilton dominated the wet early stages of the race on intermediates. In drying conditions both he and second-placed Räikkönen stopped for fuel only, since their tyres were now virtually slick. A brief shower of rain followed in which Kimi slipped by to take the lead. Lewis still had a large margin over Fernando but now the team dithered over whether to pit him for slicks – if the rain returned he might have to pit again whereas Alonso, who had more fuel, could afford to wait. McLaren waited at least a lap too long and Hamilton skittered into a gravel trap as he entered the pits, his tyres spent. Alonso duly finished second.






“We weren’t racing Räikkönen, we were racing Fernando,” Ron Dennis let slip later, the clear inference being that McLaren’s focus had been on ensuring Hamilton finished ahead of Alonso. The Spanish motorsport federation certainly thought so and complained to the FIA, which despatched an observer to the Brazilian GP to ensure equal treatment.

McLaren’s blunder had brought its drivers closer together and enabled Räikkönen to gain ground. In the denouement at Interlagos – a track whose configuration suited the F2007 – Hamilton qualified second to Ferrari’s Felipe Massa but fell behind Alonso on the first lap, went off-track trying to overtake him, then fell even further back when a speck of debris

momentarily blocked a hydraulic line, causing a gearshift malfunction. An attempt to make up places by running him on soft-compound tyres with a low fuel load in his second stint backfired when he had to make a third stop, leaving him seventh at the end – equal on points with his team-mate and one point behind race winner Räikkönen.

A protest over fuel temperature in the three cars which finished ahead of Hamilton’s came to naught, but this hasn’t stopped a conspiracy theory flourishing that McLaren ‘threw’ the drivers’ title to avoid an outright ban on competing in 2008. Regardless of whether this is true or not, though, McLaren had taken on Ferrari – and City Hall – and lost. 



#### RACE RECORD

**Starts** 34  
**Wins** 8  
**Poles** 8  
**Fastest laps** 5  
**Podiums** 16  
**Championship points** 218\*  
 \*Drivers’ championship only

#### SPECIFICATION

**Chassis** Carbonfibre monocoque  
**Suspension** Double wishbones with pushrod-actuated inboard torsion bars  
**Engine** Naturally aspirated Mercedes FO 108T V8  
**Engine capacity** 2398cc  
**Power** 810bhp @ 19000 rpm  
**Gearbox** Seven-speed semi-automatic  
**Brakes** Carbon discs front and rear  
**Tyres** Bridgestone  
**Weight** 605kg  
**Notable drivers** Fernando Alonso, Lewis Hamilton





LOGAN  
SARGEANT

# 10 THINGS I LOVE



America's first Formula 1 driver for eight years, the Williams rookie is just as happy on the water

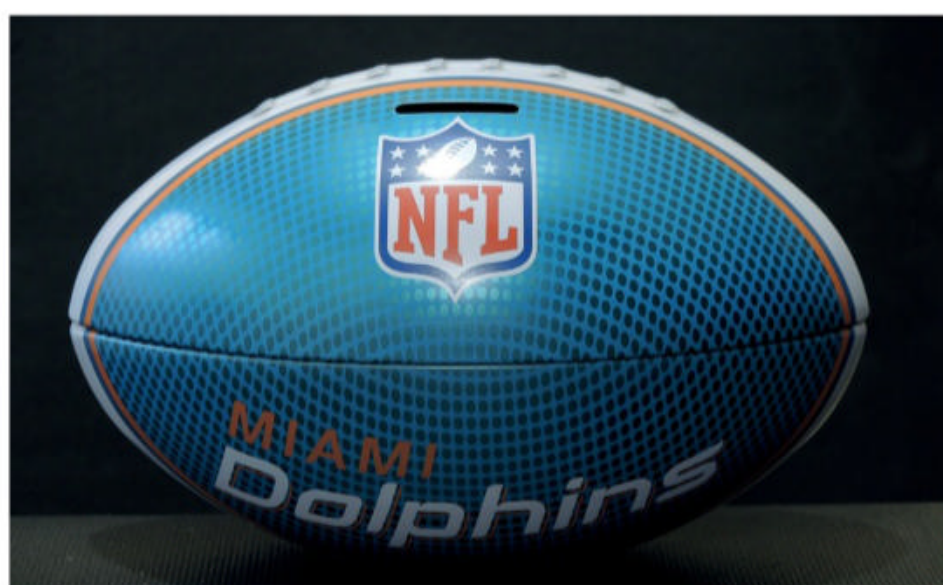


## Open water

Sailing, fishing... Just anything to do with being on a boat, being on the water. I feel like it's one of the best ways to just recharge my batteries, to be able to get a mental reset. And even water sports such as wakeboarding, that's some of my favourite things to do when I'm in my off time.

## NFL

I love American sports. I am a big NBA fan as well but, if I'd have to pick one, I would go with NFL. Miami Heat, Miami Dolphins are definitely my favorite teams. Miami through and through! I try and get to a game whenever I get a chance.



PICTURES: GLENN DUNBAR; SHUTTERSTOCK



## Drake

My hype song is *Lose Yourself* by Eminem. It's always been that song to get me in the mode I need to get into before a race. But my favourite artist is probably Drake. Just in terms of variety, I find that I like most stuff from him.

## The 'Arnold Palmer'

There's nothing better than – when I'm home in Florida, on a boat – an Arnold Palmer! A lemonade-iced tea mix. It's just very refreshing. Being on the boat. Arnold Palmer... Perfect.





## The Wolf of Wall Street

Probably my favourite movie. I just like it, I don't know why. It's just a good movie. Leonardo DiCaprio and Margot Robbie, they did such a good job. When *The Wolf of Wall Street* first came out, my parents wouldn't let me watch it, because they thought I was too young. So it took me a few years to end up watching it. I watched it a good six or seven times, probably. And because it's so long, it's more like when I get home after a weekend, and I'm chilling on the couch after going out the night before, it's a movie where I can just lay down, chill and watch it, having a good laugh as well.

## Golf

In terms of sports, the thing I've been playing most recently is golf. I'm enjoying that. It's a good way to just be outside, off my phone, hanging out with friends away from everything, just enjoying the game. It takes up a lot of time, which is good. Then, also padel, we play a lot of padel, which is fun. It's easy to get a group of four people and play. And I'm always ultra-competitive.

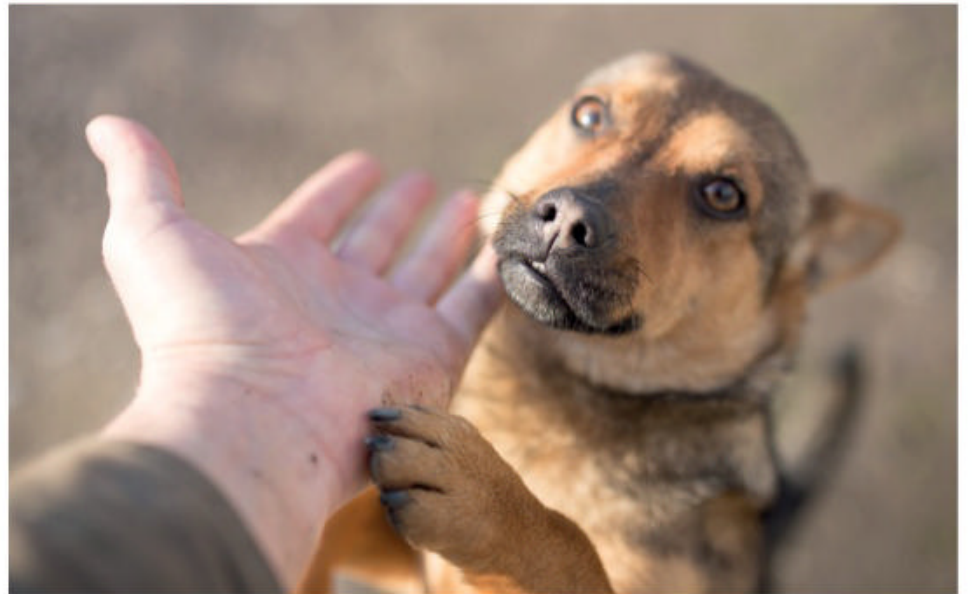


## Ice cream

It's my biggest weakness in terms of dessert. My favourite flavour is probably mint chocolate chip. Yeah, it's definitely my downfall... my dessert downfall. But don't tell the team.

## Dogs

My dog is number one. Her name is Coco. She's a rescue dog, basically just like a mix of 20-something different breeds! Yeah, she's amazing.



## Watches

I love watches, in general. It's just something that's always sort of grabbed me. I can't say any brands, but I do have a small collection... very small. I have three watches that I genuinely wear, and I really like them.



## The Bahamas

Being from Florida, it's quite close and it's very easy for us to get to... the Bahamas! So, I basically grew up visiting the Bahamas my whole life. Just the white sand beaches, crystal clear water, and the people there are so welcoming – a great place to go and enjoy a bit of time off.





## SHOWCASE

# FORMULA 1 IN 2003

20 years ago: a season defined by one-lap qualifying, a tyre war, a fair bit of chaos, and an important safety device

▼ *Jenson Button is carefully attended to by medical staff after his crash in Saturday practice for the Monaco GP. Button lost control of his BAR exiting the tunnel, before slamming into the tyre barrier at the exit of the chicane. A concussion ruled him out for the rest of the weekend*











On lap 12 of the British GP a track invasion on Hangar Straight by a protesting Irish priest by the name of Neil Horan caused chaos. The cars managed to avoid Horan and the Safety Car was deployed. Horan was found guilty of aggravated trespass and jailed for two months as a result



Fernando Alonso made his F1 debut with Minardi in 2001 but sat out 2002 as a Renault test driver. Promoted to the race seat for 2003, with the team on the up, Alonso was on the podium three times before he claimed his maiden victory in Hungary, thus becoming F1's youngest-ever winner



Jaguar's Antonio Pizzonia holds his HANS (head and neck support) device, use of which was made compulsory in F1 at the start of 2003. The device helps reduce the risk of serious neck injury but the decision wasn't initially without controversy as some drivers felt they shouldn't be made to use it







▲ Kimi Räikkönen's title challenge was dealt a huge blow by this enormous crash on the opening lap of the German GP at Hockenheim. Kimi was hit by Ferrari's Rubens Barrichello who, in turn, was squeezed into the McLaren by the Williams of Ralf Schumacher

▶ In France Jos Verstappen was fastest in a damp first one-lap qualifying, the only time a Minardi ever topped the timesheets. Celebrations were short-lived as he dropped to 19th after the second, dry, session on Saturday afternoon



▲ The tyre war erupted in Hungary following a complaint from Bridgestone-shod Ferrari over the width and contact patch of used Michelin tyres. Michelin, on Ferrari's main rivals, Williams, McLaren and Renault, was forced to alter the construction of the tyres for the last three races, all of which were won by Ferrari drivers

▶ The Schumachers obviously liked the Canadian GP in Montréal. Two years after Ralf had beaten Michael home for a first brotherly 1-2, Michael turned the tables on his younger sibling. This was the fourth occasion the pair had finished 1-2 and they would do so for the last time in Japan in 2004







◀ Although David Coulthard's F1 career continued until the end of the 2008 season, the 2003 Australian GP would be the last of his 13 GP wins. It wasn't until Germany that he stepped onto the podium again, finishing second, before rounding off the season with a third in Japan







*Just under 24 years after Alan Jones and Clay Reggazoni finished 1-2 in the 1979 German GP Williams recorded its 33rd and, currently, last 1-2 in a GP. Ralf Schumacher and Juan Pablo Montoya were the class of the field and this result moved the British team to within three points of Ferrari...*



*Michael Schumacher had a lot to smile about in Japan. Despite only finishing eighth in the last race of the season it was enough to clinch him his sixth world title. The helmeted Rubens Barrichello had just won the race, which confirmed a 13th constructors' crown for Ferrari*



*After an early challenge from fellow title protagonist Juan Pablo Montoya in the opening laps Michael Schumacher completed a relatively comfortable win of the Italian GP at Monza. The race remains the fastest-ever F1 GP, with an average speed of 153.842mph*



*In Brazil the suspension on Ralph Firman's Jordan failed as he blasted down the pit straight. The tether kept his front right wheel attached but, out of control, he narrowly missed team-mate (and eventual winner) Giancarlo Fisichella before slamming into the back of Olivier Panis's Toyota*





▶ The remains of Mark Webber's Jaguar R4 after he had crashed in monsoon conditions on the main straight at Interlagos. This shunt, and the subsequent one by Fernando Alonso, caused the race to be stopped. Eventually Jordan's Giancarlo Fisichella was awarded the win

▼ Three potential champions... and an old man! Juan Pablo Montoya, Michael Schumacher and Kimi Räikkönen pose with F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone ahead of the US GP at Indianapolis. All three, from different teams, were in with a chance of the title going into the penultimate race of 2003



▼ At the Austrian GP at the A1 Ring a faulty launch control on Cristiano da Matta's Toyota resulted in two aborted starts. Michael Schumacher won the race when it finally got underway but it would be the last race in Austria until 2014, by which time the circuit had become the Red Bull Ring






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For 2003 one-lap qualifying was introduced, in part to enable smaller teams to get exposure, the jeopardy being if you had a issue on that single run you didn't record a time. The first person to fall foul of this was Jos Verstappen when he crashed his Minardi at the Variante Alta chicane at Imola



2003 was Kimi Räikkönen's third season in F1 and he claimed his first win in Malaysia alongside five other podiums in the first eight races. At the European GP at the Nürburgring he then managed to record his first pole position at the 43rd attempt, only to retire from the lead with engine failure



A solemn Michael Schumacher on the podium after winning the San Marino GP. Michael and brother Ralf had decided to race, just hours after the death of their mother, Elisabeth, following a fall a week earlier. The brothers had flown to Cologne to be with her after qualifying before returning to Imola on Sunday morning. Both drivers then left the circuit immediately after the podium presentations had concluded



The 2003 Monaco GP was one of the very few races in F1 history that had no recorded on-track overtakes after the first lap. All position changes were a result of undercuts or overcuts at the pitstops – which included refuelling – or retirements. Juan Pablo Montoya won the race for Williams, 0.602s clear of Kimi Räikkönen's McLaren







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# MAURICE HAMILTON'S ALTERNATIVE VIEW

The old Jordan Formula 1 factory has just been demolished to make way for the final phase of the new Aston Martin campus. But the building which will replace it will serve as a reminder of success in battles against the odds



**YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF** Bosco Quinn. There's no reason why you should. Richard 'Bosco' Quinn liked to keep a low profile – which wasn't particularly difficult when working with the garrulous Eddie Jordan. The two had met in the early Eighties when the telephone engineer from Dublin helped – perhaps it's more accurate to say 'found himself persuaded to assist' – Jordan in his early attempts to become a racing driver.

It says much about their growing relationship – not to mention the way things worked back in the day – that Quinn, despite having no training as a mechanic, was despatched to the Ralt factory in Weybridge to build an RT3 in readiness for EJ's 1981 F3 campaign. By this stage, Jordan had wisely decided his talent lay with managing drivers rather than being one. A hand-to-mouth existence would see Eddie Jordan Racing (EJR) foraging through the paddock waste bin for a rival's discarded gear ratios rather than having to fork out for a new set. While EJ did the talking, Bosco kept the cars and the meagre finances together. Not to mention ensuring the boss didn't veer too far from the straight and narrow.

"Bosco was a very private man and a deep thinker," recalls Jordan. "He was good fun – but always in control. He would pull me aside at certain times and say: 'I don't think so! I don't think so!' It was his way of saying: 'Forget it, EJ!

We don't want you in jail.'"

EJR had been one of many racing outfits scratching a living while operating from a warren of industrial units within the Silverstone circuit. The small team could expand no further after Jordan had persuaded his employees – including multi-tasking designer Gary Anderson – to build a mezzanine floor with accompanying offices.

When EJ surprised even himself with plans to step up from F3000 to Formula 1, Quinn wasn't keen, mainly because he profoundly disliked the razzmatazz that came with it. Eddie found

the perfect distraction for Bosco by having him oversee the construction of a new factory on a plot of land opposite the circuit's main entrance (now part of the Aston Martin Racing campus).

It was an ambitious project, not least the £800,000 loan facilitated through Richard O'Driscoll of Allied Irish Bank. Impressed by the work of Guy Austin on the Reynard factory (which would form the nucleus of the Mercedes-AMG F1 HQ in Brackley), Jordan hired the project manager from Ridge & Partners to take care of the design. Quinn, as client-side coordinator, formed an excellent partnership with Austin, the result being a facility that would stand the test of time as the original workforce rapidly expanded from fewer than 150 to five times that number.

From the outset, Jordan had insisted his team's headquarters "must reflect our image as a serious player bringing rock'n'roll to F1". That was evident the moment you stepped into the open-plan foyer. Despite a budget stretched to – and beyond – its limit, a striking sense of art deco had been created using black granite and chrome. Typically, EJ had pulled moves left, right and centre, not least with an Italian stonework company thanks to the services of Nigel Wolheim, an Italian-speaking F1 entrepreneur who was one of many to find himself assisting the Jordan enterprise whether he liked it or not.

The effect once inside was stunning, the open

**JORDAN HAD  
INSISTED HIS TEAM'S  
HEADQUARTERS  
"MUST REFLECT OUR  
IMAGE AS A SERIOUS  
PLAYER BRINGING  
ROCK'N'ROLL TO F1"**





**The new Aston Martin campus. Construction of the final part of the facility has involved knocking down the old Jordan factory**



**The plush reception area (top) at Jordan's F1 factory (above), from where the plaque to Bosco Quinn has been saved for relocation**



**EJ surveys the build in 1991 (above). Quinn (below, left) was the driving force behind construction but died before it was opened**

staircase and walkway suiting EJ as he barked commands while on his way to the suite of offices on the upper level. Floor-to-ceiling glazing enhanced the feeling of spaciousness around the oval glass table in the boss's office, a panelled door leading to a boardroom and a massive oak table capable of seating 25 and more.

O'Driscoll (later to become Financial Controller for Jordan Grand Prix) had been moved by AIB to Essex in late 1991 but continued to rent a room of his Northampton house to Quinn, who was working all hours at the new headquarters to ensure everything was ready to meet the deadline of 20 December 1991.



Late at night, two days before the official opening, Quinn was killed in a road accident on his way home.

The team was utterly devastated. Everyone knew and loved Bosco. He had put his heart and soul into the fine building that now represented their future as much as Quinn's past. Jordan Grand Prix would do Bosco proud – and would doubtless have raised a wry smile – as it continually punched above its financial weight as EJ wheeled and dealt his way to four grand prix wins and a remarkable third in the 1999 constructors' standings. Jordan Grand Prix was sold six years later, ending a run of 250 GPs and arguably one of the most colourful interludes in F1 history.

On the morning after this year's British GP, a wrecking ball was taken to the remains of the former Jordan factory. It was an uncanny piece of timing. While the AMR management was busy next door dissecting their worst weekend by far in 2023, Bosco Quinn's memory was being dusted down with the removal of a plaque from the outside wall, close by where EJ used to park.

The Aston Martin team – with the blessing of Bosco's mother – has plans to place a memento within its impressive new campus. It will serve as a reminder, not only of what's possible when the odds seem stacked against you, but also how the team's heritage is rooted in relentless tenacity – driven by an infectious touch of Irish blarney.





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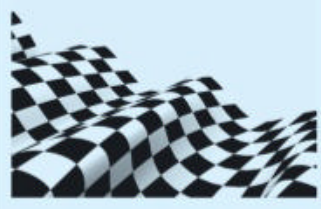
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 12

## THE HUNGARIAN GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS



There was a sense of irony in Hungary as Red Bull passed McLaren's consecutive record of wins, with a McLaren following Max home



'Be careful or you'll break it!' Unfortunately for Max his trophy succumbed to a Lando Norris bottle slam during the celebrations



Norris claimed a second consecutive podium as McLaren's renaissance continued in Hungary, with team-mate Piastri fifth

### 1 Red Bull passes McLaren victory milestone

**Not even a broken trophy** – dislodged from its perilous position at the edge of the podium during the course of a Lando Norris 'bottle slam' – could throw a shadow over Max Verstappen's win in Hungary, which took Red Bull to a record-breaking 12 consecutive victories. While team boss Christian Horner suggested he may send the bill to Norris (the ceramics take six months to make, at a cost of €40,000), *GP Racing* would humbly suggest he pitch up at BBC TV's *Repair Shop* for an inexpensive fix. It may even make for an entertaining episode of *Drive to Survive*, something desperately needed in the absence of any serious competition for the championship this season.

Such is the RB19's margin of superiority that it was inevitable it would surpass the iconic McLaren MP4/4's 11 consecutive wins in 1988. Red Bull has indicated it is pivoting design resources towards next year's car but arrived in Hungary with a raft of upgrades including new front and rear brake ducts, as well as revisions to the floor edges, engine cover and radiator inlets. Max blamed F1's 'Alternative Tyre Allocation' experiment (a sustainability

measure in which drivers have 11 rather than 13 sets of tyres for the weekend, and have no choice of compounds in qualifying) for preventing him from being able to fine-tune the new spec, but he missed out on pole because he didn't stitch together a good enough lap, going 0.2s slower in his final run.

That opened the door for Lewis Hamilton to snatch pole by a mere 0.003s thanks to a sensational lap in which he left none of the struggling W14's performance on the table. But it was business as usual once the lights went out on Sunday as Max seized the lead into Turn 1. Lewis also lost ground to the McLarens of Norris and Oscar Piastri, who started third and fourth, although he was able to poach fourth place from Piastri in the final stages after they had both been overhauled by Max's team-mate Sergio Pérez.

In fact it was Piastri who led McLaren's charge in the opening laps after passing his team-mate, only to lose that advantage when the team pitted Norris first to avoid being undercut by Hamilton at the first round of stops. Naturally this led to accusations of favouritism, but team boss Andrea Stella pointed





A first pole for Lewis since 2021 (above) was the highlight for Mercedes. Russell (right) recovered well from a disastrous qualifying



out the logic of servicing Norris first: "You cover with the car that is more at risk, and then you cover with the other car. Lando's out lap was just super, super quick, which meant Oscar lost the position. Our approach is to think about team first. We think as a team, and then we deal with the internal situation."

In the second half of the race Piastri slowed anyway, having suffered floor damage by riding a kerb too aggressively. The lost rear downforce caused him to slide more and degrade his rears.

While Norris was able to hold on to second ahead of Pérez, Stella played down suggestions from Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff that McLaren had found a second a lap through its upgrades and was now in effect F1's second quickest team.

"We had our internal estimate based on what we saw in the aerodynamic maps," he said. "Then you simulate these and this gives you a number, which I cannot share really, but it wasn't one second."

## 2 Mercedes needs George's marvellous medicine

**While the W14's lack** of race pace relative to the frontrunners meant Lewis Hamilton spent Sunday afternoon fighting against a backwards trajectory

down the field, team-mate George Russell did wring some positives from the race, making it to the top 10 despite his Q1 elimination. Russell wasn't the only driver to suggest his qualifying performance had been influenced by the experimental tyre allocation but the specific circumstances of his Q1 exit were determined by traffic.

Merc's run plan gave Russell one attempt at a quick lap at the end of the session but he was hampered by other cars fighting to do the same while occupying a similar area of the track. "The car was so quick," he said, "we didn't need to fuel for one lap and go right at the end and in loads of traffic. I was trying to respect the gentleman's agreement and got overtaken by a couple of cars, most notably Pierre [Gasly], who overtook me at the final corner. We just need to look in the mirror and recognise we made a big cock-up today."

Starting 18th, Russell was informed by Mercedes' strategists that 11th was his likeliest finishing position. In the event he outperformed that by a sizeable margin, thanks in part to a Turn 1 shunt precipitated by Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu botching his start (from an outlier fifth on the grid) and then taking out the returning Daniel Ricciardo's AlphaTauri, which in turn caused the two Alpines to collide. Having gained four positions on the opening lap, George then overtook Kevin Magnussen's Haas.

Thereafter the gains were harder since George had started on the hard-compound tyres and he was bottled up for a time behind his Mercedes predecessor, Valtteri Bottas. Cars pitting ahead enabled George to reach the top 10 and, when he made his second stop at the end of lap 46, he was able to overcut the Aston Martin of Fernando Alonso after being stuck behind him for 10 laps.

In a final stint on mediums George chased down and passed Carlos Sainz's Ferrari, despite – like his team-mate – having to lift and coast to manage engine and brake temperatures. Sixth was a unexpected bonus when he was upgraded after Charles Leclerc's pitlane speeding penalty.

"The strategists were telling me P11 is most realistic and P7 if we maximise everything," said Russell. "To come away P6 with no Safety Car, no VSC, on merit was a really great result – but, equally, proof that this was probably a missed opportunity."

## 3 "Too many mistakes" blight Ferrari weekend

**Ferrari and its drivers** continued to show signs of strain in a weekend of risk-taking and gaffe-making. Charles Leclerc qualified sixth but team-mate ▶





FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 12

Carlos Sainz had to make do with 11th, another driver to blame the experimental tyre-allocation format for falling short.

Sainz was particularly outspoken: "We arrive here on a Wednesday to prepare everything. And then on Friday you spend more time in the garage than running, because we have no tyres. Definitely something needs reviewing – either the format or the tyre allocation, the two at the same time, it's like you're not doing one thing or the other. That's what I think comes from trying to spice things up. Today I've paid the price for it."

That grid position led Ferrari to fit soft-compound tyres for the race start and Sainz made good use of them to advance onto his team-mate's tail. But he faded with the rubber and two stints on hards proved a struggle and he was unable to resist Sergio Pérez and George Russell, finishing eighth.

Leclerc looked good in his first stint on mediums but then had two catastrophic pitstops. In the first he was delayed when the left-rear wheelgun failed and had to be swapped for its spare; in the second he authored his own misfortune, incurring a penalty by slowing too late for the pitlane speed limit line, where he was caught going 0.4mph too quickly.

As a result his sixth-place finish became seventh.

"We need time to understand what we did right and wrong, because the format was different," said team principal Frédéric Vasseur. "It's not so easy to analyse the perfect weekend. You need to get all the results to be able to do retro engineering on it.

"But I think on our side, it's much more the fact that we made too many mistakes from the beginning to the end, but it's not just about the pitstop or the pit entry or the quali yesterday or the management of the tyres and so on.



Sainz (above) was unhappy with the tyre allocation experiment but the Ferrari pair (below) were nowhere near competitive

"At the end, the potential was probably better than what we showed yesterday and then today, at least with Charles – we lost 20 seconds in the race."

## 4 Ricciardo makes a quietly impressive comeback

If Daniel Ricciardo was quietly dreading his F1 comeback in place of the ousted Nyck de Vries at AlphaTauri, it didn't show in either his demeanour or the car's performance in his hands. De Vries had struggled with the AT04's instability on corner entry, a car quirk which had also afflicted Ricciardo at McLaren – to the extent that it cost him his job.

In the event, the Hungaroring's twisty nature and high temperatures on race day combined to mask those issues and enable Ricciardo to fight his way from the back of the field after becoming embroiled in the Turn 1 shunt which took both Alpines out of the race. Ricciardo qualified 13th and was dicing with Esteban Ocon into Turn 1 when he was hit from behind by Zhou Guanyu's Alfa Romeo. While the impact was hard enough to launch Ocon's car



PICTURES: GLENN DUNBAR; ZAK MAUGER; MICHAEL POTTS





All eyes were on Ricciardo in Hungary and the Aussie spent the weekend discovering what the AlphaTauri AT04 is really like

into team-mate Pierre Gasly’s Alpine with sufficient force to break Ocon’s seat, Ricciardo emerged with only light car damage.

After being bottled up behind Logan Sargeant’s Williams in the opening laps Ricciardo got to race in clear air for the first time and this contributed measurably to his understanding of the car. Stuck behind Sargeant again after his own pitstop for hard tyres, Ricciardo negotiated with the team to time the second stop – this time for mediums – to give him some clear air. This, he felt, would help him manage the tyres better, which he did over the course of a mammoth 43-lap stint in which he undercut Guanyu, Sargeant, Nico Hülkenberg and team-mate Yuki Tsunoda for a 13th-place finish.

“Just having the pace,” he said, “having the clear air and making a few mistakes, learning from those, knowing what the car likes, what it doesn’t – I think I learned a lot from the race.”

**5** Aston laments ‘wrong choices’ in development and setup

Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll finished the



Hungary was another bad weekend for early-season ‘best of the rest’ team Aston Martin, with Alonso a distant ninth and Stroll 10th

Hungarian Grand Prix in a distant ninth and 10th – Stroll, indeed, was a lap down on the leader. They had qualified eighth and 14th. All in all a very different picture from a team which had staked a claim to have the second-best car on the grid earlier in the season, when Fernando was swashbuckling his way to podium finish after podium finish.

Alonso, as is his wont, said ninth place was now the best on offer and that his car was now merely the fifth on the grid, suggesting that inadequate development is to blame, along with the new tyre construction introduced at Silverstone. Team boss Mike Krack was more nuanced and declined to blame the tyres.

“The way we’ve developed the car, it’s very complex,” he said. “You never change one thing and everything else is fine. You always have side effects when you do changes.

“And you need to weigh up: do you use, for example, a part that makes more downforce but has a different character, or vice versa. And we think that in one or two situations we’ve done not the right choice. I think Hungary was the last element in the puzzle.”

# RESULTS ROUND 12

HUNGARORING / 23.07.23 / 70 LAPS








1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1h38m08.634s
2nd	Lando Norris	McLaren	+33.731s
3rd	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+37.603s
4th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+39.134s
5th	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+62.572s
6th	George Russell	Mercedes	+65.825s
7th	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+70.317s*
8th	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+71.073s
9th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+75.709s
10th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+1 lap
11th	Alex Albon	Williams	+1 lap
12th	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	+1 lap
13th	Daniel Ricciardo	AlphaTauri	+1 lap
14th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+1 lap
15th	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri	+1 lap
16th	Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo	+1 lap
17th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+1 lap
18th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+3 laps/brakes

\*includes 5s penalty for speeding in the pitlane

Retirements		
Esteban Ocon	Alpine	2 laps/accident damage
Pierre Gasly	Alpine	1 lap/accident damage

Fastest lap	
Max Verstappen	1m20.504s on lap 53

**TYRE COMPOUNDS USED**



Hard (C3)   Medium (C4)   Soft (C5)   Inter   Wet

CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Sunny	31°C	53°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1	Verstappen	281pts	12	Gasly	16pts
2	Pérez	171pts	13	Albon	11pts
3	Alonso	139pts	14	Hülkenberg	9pts
4	Hamilton	133pts	15	Bottas	5pts
5	Russell	90pts	16	Guanyu	4pts
6	Sainz	87pts	17	Tsunoda	2pts
7	Leclerc	80pts	18	Magnussen	2pts
8	Norris	60pts	19	Sargeant	0pts
9	Stroll	45pts	20	De Vries	0pts
10	Ocon	31pts	21	Ricciardo	0pts
11	Piastri	27pts			







FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13

# THE BELGIAN GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

## 1 Familiarity breeding contempt for Verstappen

**Formula 1's summer break** couldn't have come at a better time for Max Verstappen as he homes in on a third consecutive world championship. Perhaps the absence of a really strong challenger to focus on is moving him to entertain himself by pushing for risks his team isn't willing to entertain; or maybe he just needs some time away from his colleagues, having spent so long in their company owing to the increasingly congested calendar.

Either way, a certain tetchiness was manifest in the radio traffic between Max and engineer Gianpiero Lambiase in Belgium as they bickered like an old married couple on the way to wins in both the sprint and the grand prix itself.

Weather that was capricious even by Spa-Francorchamps standards defined this weekend

as rain washed out practice on Friday, delayed the sprint shootout and curtailed the sprint itself on Saturday, then made a fleeting appearance mid-race on Sunday. As a result there was no dry running on full tanks before the GP.

A penalty for a gearbox change dictated a five-place grid drop for Max after qualifying on pole for the GP. The differing conditions between Friday evening's quali session and Saturday lunchtime's sprint shootout led to a jumbled grid for the sprint, with Max on pole by just 0.011s from McLaren's Oscar Piastri. Sergio Pérez, due to be a front-row starter in the grand prix, started eighth in the sprint and was then forced to retire after taking sidepod damage in a clash with Lewis Hamilton for which the Mercedes driver was penalised (harshly, some felt).

Persistent spray after heavy rain meant the sprint got under way an hour late, on full wets, with five laps behind the Safety Car – and, by the time Bernd Mayländer took his leave, the track was just about ready for intermediates. Since Verstappen's pit box was near the entry, Red Bull waited a lap

to bring him in so he would avoid delay in the initial scramble for the pits. Thus Piastri led a GP for the first time in his career although Max made short work of him following a brief reappearance of the Safety Car to cover the removal of Fernando Alonso's stricken Aston Martin at Pouhon.

Sunday was drier but cold, prompting uncertainty about tyre choice – even for Red Bull. The Aston Martins, McLarens and George Russell were outliers on medium Pirellis in the top 10 but, in the event, fears about the softs graining quickly went largely unrealised. Pérez quickly nailed polesitter Charles Leclerc's Ferrari at Les Combes on lap one and sailed into the lead, but there was no stopping Max.

Verstappen took advantage of Carlos Sainz and Piastri colliding at the first corner to run fourth behind Hamilton, whom he passed easily on lap six once Lewis dropped out of DRS range from Leclerc. From there it was only a matter of time before Max got by Charles (lap nine) and Pérez (lap 19).

Max had a moment at Raidillon during a brief rain shower but the principal worry was the state



Verstappen won comfortably once again, despite a grid penalty, but not without a touch of in-race bickering with his engineer

**The sprint race started under the Safety Car, the first time this has happened since the events were introduced back in 2021**



**Pérez led the GP initially, but after the pitstops he was unable to hold off Verstappen as soon as his Red Bull team-mate got onto his tail**



PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; ZAK MAUGER; ANDY HONE; SAM BLOXHAM; MICHAEL POTTS





For both Ferrari and Mercedes it was difficult to assess progress made due to the lack of dry running outside of parc fermé conditions

of relations with his engineer, who twice told him to “use your head” apropos leaning on the softs too heavily, as well as pointedly telling Max to “just follow my instruction” during a quibble about strategy. Later in the race Lambiase sharply rebuffed Max’s suggestion to stop again and go for the fastest-lap point. And all this after Max ranted about “shit execution” in Q2. Time for a holiday...

## 2 Development questions remain for Ferrari and Mercedes

**Charles Leclerc started** on pole for the Belgian Grand Prix and Lewis Hamilton was third – albeit only because of Max Verstappen’s penalty – and they finished third and fourth, but the nature of the weekend made it difficult to ascertain the true effectiveness of recent upgrades.

The lack of dry running on full tanks, which meant every team went into Sunday with a surfeit of slick tyres to choose from but little certainty over issues such as degradation on the soft compound, had another less heralded effect. Fuel calculations were also hit-and-miss, which meant a strategically divergent race (at least outside the top four) came to a largely processional conclusion as several drivers were forced to lift-and-coast to save fuel.

But the main issue for Mercedes was the interaction of the weather with the sprint weekend

race format, in which parc fermé conditions begin during Friday afternoon’s qualifying session. Mercedes had introduced another development step to the W14 comprising new sidepods and an updated floor, and the lack of running data after an FP1 washout meant setup choices involved even more guesswork than other teams. In the end it tried two different wing profiles on Hamilton and George Russell’s cars, with Russell running what team boss Toto Wolff called “a bit of a barn door on the back”. This may account for the 0.7s disparity between them in Q3, when the track was dry.

In the GP Leclerc quickly fell behind Sergio Pérez’s Red Bull but Pérez emphasised after the race that his team was so mindful of potential tyre degradation “it was quite critical for my race to get Charles on lap one”. While Red Bull didn’t suffer as much as it expected, neither did Ferrari as Leclerc finished third – on a day when many teams ran into trouble. Could this signify some progress with the SF-23’s critical weakness of being hard on tyres?

“It’s a bit too early to say,” said Leclerc, “but it’s been two or three races where we are managing our tyres better. I think today, this was definitely not the reason we finished so far behind the Red Bulls [32s off Verstappen], I think they were just quicker.”

Hamilton also lamented the W14’s inability “to keep up with the cars ahead of me”, but more troubling still was the return of the bouncing issue which afflicted last year’s W13. Nevertheless, he pitted late for new softs and set fastest lap. ▶



Mercedes brought new sidepods and a new floor to Belgium, but were troubled by a return of the bouncing that hindered the W13



Leclerc headed Pérez into La Source after the start but was behind the Red Bull by the time they reached Les Combes on the opening lap





FINISHING STRAIGHT

## RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13



**Third for Gasly in the sprint race was a welcome boost for an Alpine team reeling from another management reshuffle**

### 3 Gasly podium lifts troubled Alpine

**Alpine had pinned** its competitive hopes on the introduction of a new floor for the Belgian Grand Prix. And it desperately needed a good news story after yet another round of movings and firings as team principal Otmar Szafnauer was given the elbow after just 18 months in charge, along with sporting director Alan Permane (a Team Enstone 'lifer' who joined as an electronics engineer in 1989).

It had also just been announced that senior engineer Pat Fry was leaving to become chief technical officer at Williams – a move inked, as it turned out, earlier this year when CEO (now ex of that role) Laurent Rossi arranged an interview with Canal+ to describe the team as “amateurish”. The stink was magnified on Saturday when *L'Equipe* published an interview with former team advisor Alain Prost who heaped further ordure on Rossi (see p16).

There was nothing amateurish about Alpine's work in the sprint on Saturday when Pierre Gasly arrived in the first batch of pit callers for intermediates when the race was finally green-

flagged after the additional laps behind the Safety Car to clear spray. Slick pitwork, combined with Alpine's location further down the pitlane, meant Gasly departed in what would become a net third place behind Oscar Piastri and Max Verstappen once the rest of the cars pitted on the next lap. Gasly then held off Lewis Hamilton and the two Ferraris with a fine drive under pressure to secure the final podium slot.

He had a less impressive Sunday, though. Starting from 12th, Gasly got stuck behind Piastri's damaged and slow-moving McLaren on the run down to Eau Rouge, dropping to 16th. The team shifted him to a one-stop strategy and, though he made his softs last until lap 23, his pace on mediums thereafter wasn't good enough and he finished outside the top 10. Team-mate Esteban Ocon, on a two-stopper, made great passes on Yuki Tsunoda and Alex Albon on his way to eighth.

### 4 “Reality check” for McLaren despite sprint podium

**While the headline results** might seem good enough – Oscar Piastri second in the sprint, Lando

Norris a surprise seventh in the grand prix after a yo-yo Sunday afternoon – McLaren team principal Andrea Stella described the weekend as “a reality check”.

He was not referring to qualifying for the grand prix (where Piastri and Lando Norris were fifth and eighth on the grid), or the first-lap incident where Piastri was nerfed by Carlos Sainz at La Source and suffered race-ending steering damage. Rather he was lamenting the way events exposed the car's remaining weak spots despite recent performance upgrades.

One shortcoming is the lack of a lower-drag rear wing optimised to work with the revised aero components elsewhere on the car. This meant both MCL60s ran with higher downforce than would be preferable at Spa, which played in McLaren's favour while conditions were wet but was – quite literally – a drag when the track dried.

Lando Norris's changing fortunes on Sunday indicated there is progress to be made on the chassis dynamics side, too, as he struggled on the medium tyres and lost three places before making an early stop for hards. These he described as making things “even worse”.

“Then we put the soft on and everything came back towards us,” he said. “I don't know how I

PICTURES: ZAK MAUGER; ANDY HONE; MICHAEL POTTS





McLaren's extra downforce helped in the wet sprint race with Norris (above) sixth and Piastri second, but not in the GP itself

ended up P7. Honestly, I felt like I was last for the most part.”

“Fixing the efficiency of the car at low drag is on the to-do list,” said Stella. “But it was lower than some of the priorities that we have worked on in the previous months.

“The car is improved in some areas. This was

Sunday was a better day for Alonso after team-mate Stroll had wrecked his progress in the sprint shootout on his birthday



confirmed. But at the same time, this weekend confirmed the areas we haven't addressed yet. It gives us a reality check that there's more work to do and, to some extent, confirms that those areas, they need to be addressed quite urgently.”

## 5 Alonso recovers after unhappy birthday

**Fernando Alonso** turned 42 on Saturday in Belgium but there was little cause for celebration on track as team-mate Lance Stroll binned his Aston Martin while circulating on medium slicks during the second phase of the sprint shootout. The resulting red flag prevented Alonso from setting a timed lap, meaning neither of them progressed. Alonso then dropped his car at Pouhon in the sprint itself, straying onto a wet kerb and spinning into the gravel.

Sunday was better as Alonso raced from ninth to fifth and Stroll limited the potential damage of a one-stop strategy by finishing ninth, having started 10th. For a time it looked like Stroll might challenge Lando Norris for seventh but heavy tyre-saving in the final laps left him vulnerable to Alpine's charging Esteban Ocon.

Alonso had to lift-and-coast to save fuel in the final laps but was helped by George Russell having to back off for similar reasons.

“We had a few thoughts [on setup] after Hungary, after Silverstone,” said Alonso. “So the team was making a few setup changes also to the car. And I think it paid off today. The car felt more normal, more competitive.”

# RESULTS ROUND 13

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS / 30.07.23 / 44 LAPS



1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1h22m30.450s
2nd	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+22.305s
3rd	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+32.259s
4th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+49.671s
5th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+56.184s
6th	George Russell	Mercedes	+63.101s
7th	Lando Norris	McLaren	+73.719s
8th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+74.719s
9th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+79.340s
10th	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri	+80.221s
11th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+83.084s
12th	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	+85.191s
13th	Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo	+95.441s
14th	Alex Albon	Williams	+96.184s
15th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+101.754s
16th	Daniel Ricciardo	AlphaTauri	+103.071s
17th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+104.476s
18th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+110.450s

### Retirements

Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	23 laps/accident damage
Oscar Piastri	McLaren	0 laps/accident damage





### Fastest lap

Lewis Hamilton 1m47.305s on lap 44

### F1 Sprint - 11 laps

1st	Verstappen	2nd	Piastri	3rd	Gasly
4th	Sainz	5th	Leclerc	6th	Norris
7th	Hamilton	8th	Russell		

### TYRE COMPOUNDS USED

				
Hard (C2)	Medium (C3)	Soft (C4)	Inter	Wet

CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Variable	21°C	33°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1	Verstappen	314pts	11	Piastri	34pts
2	Pérez	189pts	12	Gasly	22pts
3	Alonso	149pts	13	Albon	7pts
4	Hamilton	148pts	14	Hülkenberg	9pts
5	Leclerc	99pts	15	Bottas	5pts
6	Russell	99pts	16	Guanyu	4pts
7	Sainz	92pts	17	Tsunoda	3pts
8	Norris	69pts	18	Magnussen	2pts
9	Stroll	47pts	19	Sargeant	0pts
10	Ocon	35pts	20	De Vries	0pts
			21	Ricciardo	0pts





FINISHING STRAIGHT

## RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14

## DUTCH GP

25-27 August 2023  
Zandvoort

PICTURE: ALASTAIR STALEY. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDREDGE



## THE MAIN EVENT

**Welcome to Max Town.** The success of a certain Dutch driver brought this grand prix back onto the calendar in 2021 after a 36-year hiatus.

Zandvoort's origins are the topic of much debate among motorsport historians. For years it was believed Johannes Bernhardus Theodorus Hugenoltz – thankfully known to the racing fraternity as merely 'John' – arrived at the track layout by joining up roads built by occupying German forces during World War II. Certainly Hugenoltz managed Zandvoort for a time and became a celebrated circuit designer; Suzuka and Jarama are among his many credits. The current thinking is that it was the work of the Royal Dutch Motorcycle Association, employing 1927 Le Mans winner Sydney 'Sammy' Davis as a consultant.

The latest version of the track features a banked corner whose increasing gradient was determined by a Fibonacci sequence, giving a number of different racing lines.

## 2022 RACE RECAP

Max Verstappen delighted his home fans with a 30th career F1 win in a suitably commanding fashion, leading from pole position until making a stop for soft tyres behind the Safety Car on lap 55 of 72 and then rapidly reclaiming that lead from Lewis Hamilton. The Mercedes driver was the only member of the leading group not to pit at this point and ultimately slipped to fourth behind his teammate George Russell and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Carlos Sainz had started third, behind Max and Charles, but a bungled pitstop consigned him to eighth at the flag.

**KEY CORNER: TURN 3** While the banking on Zandvoort's fast final corner has been something of a disappointment since it was first used in 2021, Turn 3's mathematically generated gradient adds unpredictability by giving a choice of different approaches.



## RACE DATA

**Venue** Circuit Zandvoort  
**First GP** 1952  
**Number of laps** 72  
**Circuit length** 2.646 miles  
**Race distance** 190.504 miles  
**Lap record** 1m11.097s  
 Lewis Hamilton (2021)  
**F1 races held** 32  
**Winners from pole** 14  
**Pirelli compounds** C1, C2, C3

## CAR PERFORMANCE

**Downforce level** Medium  
**Cooling requirement** Medium  
**Full throttle** 61%  
**Top speed** 192mph  
**Average speed** 133mph

## TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

**Friday** 25 August  
**Practice 1** 11:30-12:30  
**Practice 2** 15:00-16:00  
**Saturday** 26 August  
**Practice 3** 10:30-11:30  
**Qualifying** 14:00-15:00  
**Sunday** 27 August  
**Race** 14:00  
**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1  
**Highlights** Channel 4

## THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2022  
Max  
Verstappen  
Red Bull



2021  
Max  
Verstappen  
Red Bull



1985  
Niki  
Lauda  
McLaren



1984  
Alain  
Prost  
McLaren



1983  
René  
Arnoux  
Ferrari



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FINISHING STRAIGHT

## RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15

## ITALIAN GP

1-3 September 2023  
Monza

PICTURE: MARK SUTTON. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDREDGE



## RACE DATA

**Venue** Autodromo Nazionale di Monza  
**First GP** 1950  
**Number of laps** 53  
**Circuit length** 3.599 miles  
**Race distance** 190.586 miles  
**Lap record** 1m21.046s Rubens Barrichello (2004)  
**F1 races held** 72  
**Winners from pole** 25  
**Pirelli compounds** C3, C4, C5

## CAR PERFORMANCE

**Downforce level** Low  
**Cooling requirement** Medium  
**Full throttle** 75%  
**Top speed** 220mph  
**Average speed** 157mph

## TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

**Friday** 1 September  
**Practice 1** 12:30-13:30  
**Practice 2** 16:00-17:00  
**Saturday** 2 September  
**Practice 3** 11:30-12:30  
**Qualifying** 15:00-16:00  
**Sunday** 3 September  
**Race** 14:00  
**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1  
**Highlights** Channel 4

## THE MAIN EVENT

**Formula 1 without** *la pista magica* and its whispering trees would be simply unthinkable. Monza has hosted the Italian Grand Prix every year bar one since 1950, and that interruption was not for the Covid pandemic but for a much-needed revamp of the facilities. Following the first-lap accident which ultimately claimed the life of Ronnie Peterson in 1978 a large-scale infrastructure project addressed a number of safety issues, including kerbs and run-off areas, and improved pit facilities. But by that time the Automobile Club of Bologna had swept in and secured a contract to host the Italian GP at Imola in 1980.

Perhaps more than any other of the 'historic' F1 tracks Monza retains a tangible sense of connection to its past – partly because of the presence of the old concrete banking where the works Mercedes dominated in 1955...

## 2022 RACE RECAP

As a measure of how Ferrari's relative competitiveness had departed in the second half of the season, Charles Leclerc qualified on pole but was overhauled by Max Verstappen – who started seventh after being penalised for exceeding his annual quota of power unit elements.

The race ended in controversial circumstances after Daniel Ricciardo's McLaren halted with an oil leak and the marshals were unable to remove it, forcing the race to end behind the Safety Car. Even Christian Horner – perhaps with a view to being able to leave the circuit without being pelted with rotten fruit and vegetables – opined that a red flag and a restart would have been better.

**KEY CORNER: TURN 1** The Curva Parabolica does precisely what its name suggests, bringing the flow of traffic around in a U-shaped trajectory – in this case onto a high-speed section, so getting this corner right in both qualifying and the race is essential.



## THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2022  
Max  
Verstappen  
Red Bull



2021  
Daniel  
Ricciardo  
McLaren



2020  
Pierre  
Gasly  
AlphaTauri



2019  
Charles  
Leclerc  
Ferrari



2018  
Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes



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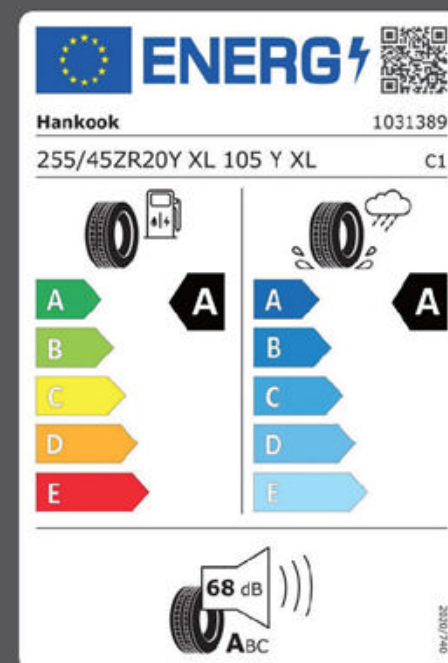
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Advanced handling



\* EU label grade varies by size

1) TÜV SÜD Tire Test 2022, Report No. 713252186-BM01, -PM01. Test period March 2022. Test performed on the Hankook Ventus iON S with four competitor tyres, in the size 245/45 ZR19 102Y XL. Test vehicles: Tesla Model S 85, Tesla Model S P100D, Audi Q5 Sportback 40 TDI, VW Tiguan 2.0 TDI. Test location: IDIADA, Papenburg, Neubiberg, Garching. Applies to all further mentions of the TÜV SÜD Tire Test.





FINISHING STRAIGHT

## RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 16

## SINGAPORE GP

15-17 September 2023  
Marina Bay

PICTURE: STEVEN TEE. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDREDGE



## RACE DATA

**Venue** Marina Bay**Street Circuit****First GP** 2008**Number of laps** 63**Circuit length** 3.062 miles**Race distance** 192.913 miles**Lap record** 1m 41.905 secs

Kevin Magnussen (2018)

**F1 races held** 13**Winners from pole** 8**Pirelli compounds** TBA

## CAR PERFORMANCE

**Downforce level** High**Cooling requirement** High**Full throttle** 45%**Top speed** 190mph**Average speed** 104mph

## TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

**Friday** 15 September**Practice 1** 10:30-11:30**Practice 2** 14:00-15:00**Saturday** 16 September**Practice 3** 10:30-11:30**Qualifying** 14:00-15:00**Sunday** 17 September**Race** 13:00**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1**Highlights** Channel 4

## THE MAIN EVENT

**Get ready to go faster** – revisions to the Marina Bay Circuit will make for a shorter lap this year, cutting out a sequence of 90-degree bends in the final sector. Simulations place the lap time 'delta' at eight seconds but, as ever, the proof will be delivered on the race weekend.

Redevelopment of The Float arena, where Turns 16-19 brought the cars between the floating stage and its grandstand, means the track will now bypass the area where Nelson Piquet Jr staged his infamous 'accidental' crash in the inaugural Singapore Grand Prix of 2008. The track will now carry on along Raffles Avenue to form a straight of almost 380m between Turn 15 and the new Turn 16, a sharp right-hander which was formerly Turn 20.

Enjoy this novelty while it lasts, because the circuit will revert to its previous configuration once work on the new NS Square is complete.

## 2022 RACE RECAP

Singapore's return following its Covid hiatus delivered a number of unusual features, not least rain in the qualifying session where Charles Leclerc claimed pole position ahead of Sergio Pérez. Max Verstappen was left to fulminate in eighth place after he was told to abort his Q3 hot lap because he was low on fuel.

Max then had an unusually scrappy race as Pérez made a crucial pass on Leclerc into Turn 1 and went on to win by 7.595s, a margin shortened by 5s when Checo was penalised for twice failing to observe the minimum distance to the Safety Car.

**KEY CORNER: TURN 16** All eyes will be on this corner in 2023 as the temporary extension of the straight for this year only offers just a small hint of an overtaking opportunity – as well as a higher approach speed which may trigger errors.



## THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2022

Sergio  
Pérez  
Red Bull

2019

Sebastian  
Vettel  
Ferrari

2018

Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes

2017

Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes

2016

Nico  
Rosberg  
Mercedes



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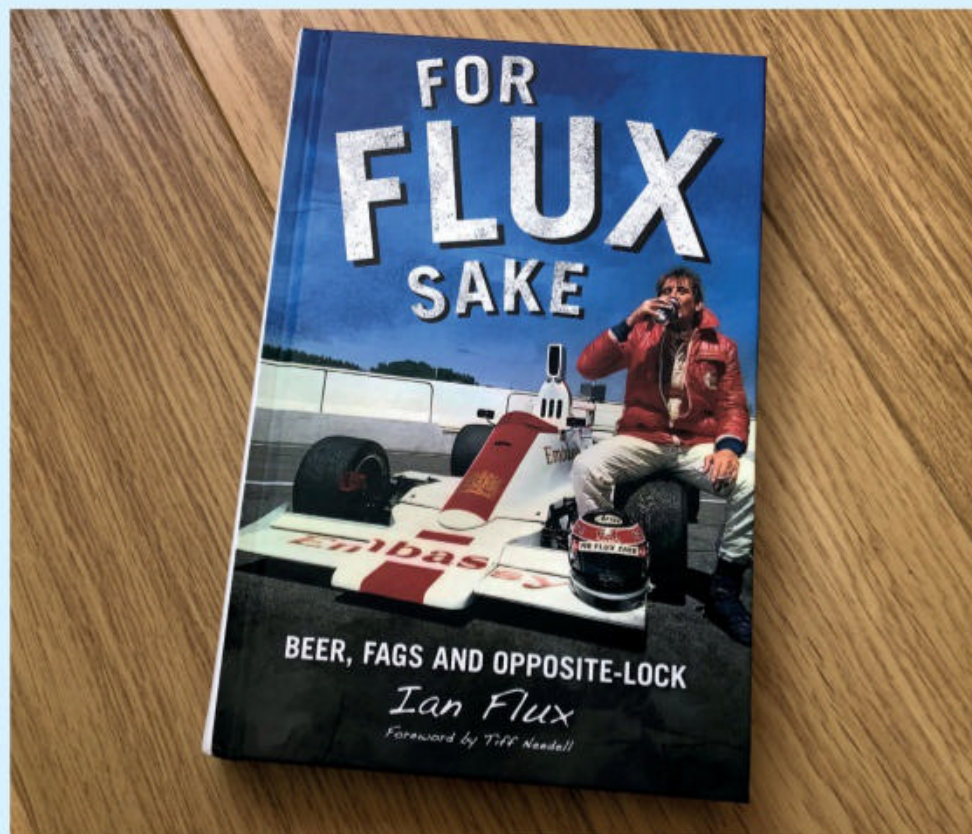
### The Timex brand

continues to carve out a niche in smart, affordable vintage reissues and for its latest timepiece it's gone back through the archives to the golden era of jet aviation (ie before the bean-counters got at the seat pitches in economy). The original World Time featured 23 cities of the world on a rotating bezel, enabling the wearer to tell the time anywhere in the world.



Many nations have subsequently adopted and/or dropped Daylight Saving Time, rendering the accuracy a little uncertain, but the idea remains quirky and fun. The chunky 39mm barrel-shaped case, minimalist dial features,

geometric second hand and domed crystal cover are delightfully retro, as is the European theme (the city names use French spellings). It's also water-resistant to 50m.



**FOR FLUX SAKE**

**Price** £20

[evropublishing.com](https://evropublishing.com)

**Subtitled "Beer, fags and opposite-lock"**, this memoir is every bit as colourful as its author. Ian Flux is a legend of the British motorsport scene and a properly old-school character who has lived life to the full, both as a racer in his own right and as a mechanic. Besides winning titles in Formula Vee, Sports 2000, Thundersports, the TVR Tuscan Challenge and the British GT championship, he's raced machinery as diverse as junior single-seaters, Jaguar XJR-15s (on the Formula 1 support package) and a McLaren F1.

It's not all beer-fuelled hijinks, though; Flux reveals darker times including episodes of childhood sexual abuse and the aftermath of Graham Hill's fatal plane crash in 1975 (Flux had been working as a mechanic for the Embassy Hill team and is pictured in the outfit's paddock runabout, an Embassy-liveried Fiat 126). The book squeezes in a lot of narrative and zips along well, as you might expect of a tome co-written by Matt James, an award-winning author and editor of *GP Racing's* former sister title *Motorsport News*.





## BLACK EYEWEAR

**Price from** £187

[blackeyewear.com](http://blackeyewear.com)

**Black Eyewear** was founded by optician and jazz devotee Robert Roope, beginning with a pop-up shop on London's Goodge Street before opening establishments in Fitzrovia and St Albans. Roope cites the eyewear sported by the legendary jazz musicians of the 1950s as his inspiration and, indeed, the range includes frames named

after the likes of Dizzy Gillespie, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald and Buddy Rich.

The brand recently achieved breakout recognition when Lady Gaga was photographed wearing a set of Black Eyewear frames named after Courtney Pine. All the frames can be ordered with prescription lenses, either clear or tinted.



## AVI-8 SPITFIRE LAGUNA LIMITED EDITION

**Price** £285

[avi-8.co.uk](http://avi-8.co.uk)

### Supermarine Spitfire P8331

'Sumatra' was one of the first batch of MkII B Spitfires delivered to 303 Tadeusz Kosciuszko City of Warsaw Squadron at RAF Northolt in May 1941. It's currently undergoing restoration by the Laguna Spitfire Legacy, an organisation named after 303 Squadron's acting wing commander Piotr Laguna, the last man to fly the plane in battle. AVI-8, the aviation-themed watch brand, has partnered with LSL to create a limited-edition timepiece commemorating 303 Squadron and

LSL's efforts to make P8331 airworthy again and achieve recognition for the Polish pilots and ground crew who served in exile during WWII.

The timepiece's twin-register layout evokes a Spitfire instrument panel while streaks of red and white and the 303 Squadron badge signify the Polish flag. The solid steel 42mm case and custom flowing pushers feature details inspired by the Spitfire, including the distinctively curved wings and the airframe's panelling. Proceeds from the sale of each watch will go to the restoration of P8331.







FINISHING STRAIGHT

# THE FINAL LAP

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PICTURES



## BLOOD ON THE CARPET AT 'TEAM ENSTONE'

**Mercedes swears by the 'no-blame' culture** at Brackley and its ex-head of strategy James Vowles is at pains to instil something similar now he's in charge of Williams. Meanwhile, the latest Alpine management merry-go-round shows it operates to a philosophy of 'blame everyone'.

Laurent Rossi, the now-former CEO, embodied this. After a turbulent start to 2023, he arranged an interview with French broadcaster Canal+ to label his employees as "amateurish". Shockingly, this didn't improve internal morale. Perhaps that's why, around this time, chief technical officer Pat Fry decided to pack his bags for Grove, having been sold a more stable vision by Vowles.

Little wonder Alain Prost has since declared Rossi to be "an inept manager who thinks he can overcome his incompetence with his arrogance and his lack of humanity towards his people". But Rossi's divisiveness shouldn't have mattered

he rightly said that wasn't realistic, they showed him the door. Likewise, sporting director Alan Permane – an Enstone veteran of 34 years – was handed his P45 for trying to persuade the powers that be to stick to an already-defined 100-race plan that should have borne fruit come 2026.

By our count, Alpine (née Renault) has therefore binned off 12 senior figures in the last five years. This from a team which also let Fernando Alonso defect to upwardly mobile rival Aston Martin and protégé Oscar Piastri to McLaren, the latter ending in an embarrassing court case Alpine easily lost. The accepted wisdom in F1 is that to cultivate success you need a well-defined plan of attack, pragmatism and stability to deliver it, plus plenty of cash. Alpine appears to only offer one of those.

It all smacks of chaos. When actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney put hands in pockets to contribute towards the recent €200million investment into Alpine, they might have hoped to

soon replicate the runaway global success of football-based TV series *Welcome to Wrexham*. But this management turnover would make even volatile Watford blush.

If there is a defence to be made of Alpine's clear-out, it's that new leaders often bring fresh ideas. When the cost cap limits how much teams may overhaul infrastructure, focus turns to chasing the last word in organisational efficiency. Hiring people with an outside perspective and no sentimentality for what went before might expedite this. An attempted reset is the result.

That said, Szafnauer was only in the job 18 months. Since F1 teams are slow-moving beasts, that's not enough time to markedly alter the course. In other words, he wasn't given the chance to fully act upon the outside ideas he brought to the table when replacing longer-lasting predecessor Cyril Abiteboul.

As a result of this chopping and changing, already questions must be asked about the next suite of suits to take charge at Alpine. Given the ongoing instability, do they lack an awareness for having agreed to come onboard in the first place? Or have they gone in with their eyes open, knowing they might get the boot in double-quick time? The latter should then raise serious questions over their motivation, commitment and true vision for Alpine's greater good. Are they misguided or downright Machiavellian?



**Permane (top) and Szafnauer (above) have been binned by Alpine as it flounders for success**

anymore when, in July, he was moved to work on 'special projects'. Namely, updating his CV and writing a new cover letter.

Team principal Otmar Szafnauer suddenly had greater influence. But the overarching Renault Group's board made the mistake of asking him to cultivate success more or less overnight. When



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